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The 1997 volume of "Notes on Literacy," numbers 1-4, includes the following articles: "Community Based Literacy, Burkina Faso"; "The Acquisition of a Second Writing System"; "Appropriate Methodology and Social Context"; "Literacy Megacourse Offered"; "Fitting in with Local Assumptions about Literacy: Some Ethiopian Experiences"; "Gender in Primers"; "Can There Be Writing without Reading?"; "A Serious Attempt To Setup a Community-Owned Literacy Project"; "Education and Development: Is the Relationship Always Positive?"; "The REFLECT Approach Used in an SIL Setting"; "Report on the 42nd Annual Convention of the International Reading Association"; "Literacy and Script Reform in Occupation Japan: Reading between the Lines"; "The Place of Mother Tongue Literacy in Social Development in Three African Contexts"; "When Students Don't Learn, When Schools Don't Teach: Minority School Failure in Perspective." (KFT)

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notes on LITERACY

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NOTES ON LITERACY

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Community-based Literacy, Burkina Faso
Final Evaluation Report[1]

Steve Walter, International Literacy Coordinator for SIL

1. An overview of the project

The project which is the subject of this evaluation is a literacy project called "Community-based Literacy, Burkina Faso." Primary external funding came from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The primary executing agency in Burkina Faso was the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an International NGO. The CIDA reference number is 01776-S44242. As the project title suggests, the project was carried out in the country of Burkina Faso in West Africa.

Although conceptualized as a single project, the project had four components in terms of target population and the location of these populations in Burkina Faso. Each component coincides with a distinct linguistic people group. In most cases, such people groups are associated with a particular geographic zone in the country. Each group speaks a distinct language with these languages being known as "national languages" in the parlance of the country. There are approximately seventy such people groups in the country with nearly every citizen having close ties to one or another of these cultural units.

The four people groups—Bissa, Bwamu, Cerma, Karaboro—participating in the project have a combined population of 750-800,000 people which is close to ten percent of the national population. In this sense, the potential impact of the project is substantial.

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[1] Editor's note: The format of this report is in keeping with such documents and therefore does not conform to all the standards of an academic article. This document has been edited. The full document is available from the SIL International Literacy Office.

A listing of the agencies abbreviated in this text are included at the end of this report.

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Relevant facts about Burkina Faso

The following facts are relevant to understanding the context in which the project was carried out and for grasping the significance of the evaluative discussion on project activities:

Population: 9.8 million

Rural population: 82% of the total

Number of ethnic groups or languages: 72

Percentage of the population speaking French: 10%

Adult literacy rate: 10–20%

Number of villages in the country: 8,000

Per capita GNP: $300

Percentage of eligible age cohort beginning primary school: 38%

The literacy situation in Burkina Faso

Estimates of the national adult literacy rate range from ten (10) to twenty (20) percent. Most of this literacy is French-based. Rates of literacy in the respective mother tongues are negligible. National language policy encourages literacy through the mother tongue although most past activity has focused on the three most populous languages: Moore, Dioula, and Fulfulde.

After the revolution (1983), an effort was launched—known as the Alpha Commando program—to make the country literate in a short, single burst of intense activity. People were brought to a single location from every village in the country and given basic orientation on how to teach literacy. Then they were sent back to their villages to organize classes and to teach people to read. The program produced little significant improvement in literacy but did create a certain amount of awareness as to the need for literacy and associated skills.

To give technical leadership to work in adult education, the National Literacy Institute (INA) was organized within the Ministry of Education. This Institute is designed as a technical support agency. Actual programs in the field are the responsibility of another agency: Literacy Service to the Masses (SA) also working under the Ministry of Education.

Structure and methodology of the current project

In its execution, the project has been a joint effort of the Burkina Faso branch, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL-Burkina Faso), and the Ministry of Education. On the Ministry's side, project responsibility was assumed at the provincial level by DPEBA, the provincial realization of the national Ministry of Education, and by SA, the province-level adult literacy agency. Within SIL, project responsibility was allocated to field teams having specific programmatic responsibilities for each of the people groups participating in the literacy project. These teams are administered by SIL-Burkina Faso. General project coordination was the responsibility of Mrs. Olivia Tottle, a member of SIL-Burkina Faso. The reader is referred to Appendix 2 for a diagram of the general organizational structure of the project.

The four participating people groups were chosen for inclusion in the project because *(a)* there was strong local motivation for literacy, *(b)* the necessary foundational linguistic research had already been done by SIL, and *(c)* basic pedagogical materials as well as a body of post-literacy materials already existed (or were in draft) to support basic literacy classes.

The basic literacy cycle

For historical reasons, Burkina Faso has evolved the somewhat unusual pattern of scheduling literacy classes in short intensive sessions during the hot dry season of the year (January to May). Needed materials are developed in August to November preceding the season, refresher courses for teachers are offered in December, teachers are trained in January, and classes are held from February to April. After the season is over, technical and administrative staffs get together, under the auspices of DPEBA, to evaluate the season's activities and to make needed adjustments for the next season.

Program levels

The project being evaluated was conceptualized to have three levels. Each level takes a season to complete meaning that it takes three seasons or three calendar years for the student to complete the full cycle of courses or levels of the program. The levels are the following:

Level 1: Basic literacy (including basic math);

Level 2: Advanced literacy (more math, fluency in reading and writing);

Level 3: Basic oral French and literacy in French.

Learners are not required to progress through the three levels. Learners who successfully complete the first level are encouraged to take the second level, but less than half do so. Participation in the third level is primarily a matter of individual interest and initiative.

Local sponsoring committees and commissions

A significant feature of the project has been the organization of local bodies to provide community-level leadership and support. There are two levels of such bodies: language sub-commissions and village committees.

Language sub-commissions.

Each language group is expected to have a language committee or sub-commission which speaks for the community on matters of language policy, problems of language development, educational strategies, and priorities for literacy and other language-based, development activity. These sub-commissions are generally made up of recognized leaders and elders who also have a reasonable level of education.

The role of the sub-commissions with respect to the literacy project was to provide a general endorsement of the literacy program, make needed decisions on orthographic problems, contribute to the development of needed materials, and to actively promote the literacy program throughout the language area.

Village literacy committees.

Each village wishing to host literacy classes was required to have a literacy committee. This committee was/is responsible for the physical plant (if there is one), for promoting participation in the literacy program at the village level, for registration of participants in the literacy classes, and for handling any problems which come up with respect to the literacy classes such as teacher absenteeism, missing materials or equipment, and teacher/community problems.

Materials and curriculum

Most of the didactic materials used in the project were developed by SIL teams assigned to the respective language community. The initial primers for each used an instructional model developed by INA, the adult literacy agency. The method is an eclectic method with a functional theme. Depending on the focus of the teachers, the method may have either a top-down or bottom-up instructional focus. The method is similar to that used in many adult literacy programs around the world.

Each lesson begins by making a practical point such as planting trees or boiling water. A sentence appears in the lesson containing at least one word containing a letter or sound to be focused on for that lesson. This is followed by some simple text for basic reading practice.

Separate materials exist for teaching math. These materials are supplemented by generic materials supplied by INA.

Other materials include post-literacy materials primarily on a range of development issues in health, agriculture, and nutrition.

Among the four project components, materials for the second and third levels are somewhat less homogeneous than in the first level.

Teacher selection and training

Because this was a mother tongue literacy project, all teachers had to be speakers of the language of instruction. Since, in most cases, there was little or no previous experience with mother tongue literacy, there was no pool of experienced teachers to draw from. Accordingly, the first batch of teacher candidates was drawn from among those who had had at least a little formal schooling in the French-based school system. These were taught to read in their own language, and then were taught to teach others how to read. They were also given basic instruction in classroom management, record keeping, etc.

After the first year of classes, the pool of potential teachers expanded to include those who had participated in the initial literacy cycle. As the program became more solid, it became a standard requirement that teacher candidates complete at least the first two courses (basic literacy, advanced literacy) before being eligible to work as a teacher.

In most cases, training consisted of a two to four week training course in the provincial capital or other appropriate center. The training content included *(a)* further skill development in reading, math, and other content areas; *(b)* orientation to any linguistic or orthographic changes being introduced; *(c)* teaching skills and methods; *(d)* classroom management; *(e)* project record keeping and reporting; *(f)* various practical management and logistical matters such as delivery of materials, timing of supervisory visits, and disposition of classroom equipment.

Initially, the training staff consisted of the SIL linguists/literacy specialists and any experienced local teachers. As the project became established, training was taken over by local supervisors and coordinators under the broad supervision of provincial adult literacy officers (SA).

Supervision

In each component, project supervision existed on two levels: *(a)* the actual village-level classes and *(b)* the overall program for that component.

Village-level supervision.

Responsibility for supervision of the actual classes was split between the SIL literacy teams and named supervisors. Initially, supervisory responsibility was assumed primarily by the SIL teams. However, as capable and qualified local personnel were identified and developed, these assumed supervisory functions. By the time the project ended (in terms of Canadian input), most village-level supervision had been taken over by local personnel.

Supervision at this level consisted of the following activities: regularly visiting and monitoring classroom activity, helping teachers handle any problems which had arisen, and distributing any needed materials.

Component-level supervision.

Responsibility for the supervision (or coordination) of each component was variously split between SIL, DPEBA, SA, and a named coordinator. The nature of the involvement of each depended on such things as factors of availability, training and expertise, and ability to travel.

Activities at this level included: training, reporting, problem solving, and coordination of activities between the various stakeholders.

Evaluation

Project evaluation activities occurred at three levels: learner evaluations, component-level operational evaluations, and project-level evaluation (of which this report is the end product).

Learner evaluation.

DPEBA has an established system for evaluating each learner at the end of the learning season. This has been most formalized for those completing the basic level literacy classes as there has been a national desire to officially "certify" those who have become literate. The evaluation consists of an individualized test having written and production components. A separate, language-specific evaluation instrument has been prepared for each component. The evaluation is administered and evaluated under SA supervision at the end of the literacy season. A government certificate is given to all who pass the test.

Component-level evaluation.

Shortly after the end of each literacy season, SIL, DPEBA, SA, and local project personnel (the coordinator and supervisors) get together to evaluate the season. This evaluation includes a look at materials, the functioning of the various classes, the suitability of the teacher training, and any needed operational adjustments which should be made.

Project-level evaluation.

At the end of the project (as funded by CIDA), a formal evaluation of the whole project was carried out. This evaluation included a review of project documents, site visits and interviews, interviews with project staffs, discussions with national technical personnel, and some spot testing of program participants.

2. Procedure of the evaluation

Evaluation paradigm

The general instructions for the evaluation are set forth in the Terms of Reference. The reader is referred to Appendix 1 for a full statement of these terms. Methodologically, the general evaluational paradigm used was that of information-based or naturalistic evaluation (Bhola 1990) sans some of the constructivist phenomenological notions that many associate with the process of naturalistic evaluation.

Evaluation model

Generally, the evaluation model underlying this study melds elements from the CIPP (Context-Input-Process-Product) model of Daniel Stufflebeam and the discrepancy evaluation model of Malcolm Provus.

Specifically, the evaluation was carried out in a such a way that the following four (4) goals would be achieved:

1. to determine the extent to which the project's goals were met;
2. to determine ways in which the program could and should be improved (assuming that it continues in some form);
3. to identify specific and concrete impact upon those participating in the project;
4. to garner (articulate) any insights about the theory and practice of literacy generated by the program.

Evaluational activities

In order to gather the information needed to meet the goals of the evaluation, the following activities were undertaken:

1. a careful review of all official project documents;
2. interviews with all SIL project staff including general administrative staff;
3. interviews with all DPEBA and SA staff personnel involved in project implementation;
4. visits to all four project locations to observe the setting, facilities, training activities, and classes (where these were in session);
5. meetings with local project personnel (teachers, supervisors, and coordinators);
6. meetings with local sub-commissions where possible;
7. analysis of project data;
8. meetings with a sampling of cooperating NGOs involved directly or indirectly in project activities;
9. an interview with the director of the National Literacy Institute;
10. an interview with the Minister of Education.

Preliminary presentation of findings

The final phase of the evaluation in Burkina Faso included separate presentations of preliminary findings to participating SIL staff personnel (plus the senior administrative staff), and to the general director of the National Literacy Institute. These presentations seemed well-received and served several purposes. First, the presentation to the SIL staff gave an opportunity to verify and refine some of the observations made and conclusions drawn by the evaluator.

Secondly, the presentation to the head of the National Literacy Institute provided not only an opportunity to inform the director of project activity but also to elicit feedback from this agency on some of the problem areas which had been identified.

Thirdly, the presentation to the National Literacy Institute provided an additional point of contact between the two agencies (SIL and INA) at a technical level which should facilitate future cooperation between the two agencies.

3. Project goals and objectives

As per the goals of the evaluation, the first task was to evaluate the extent to which the project's goals and objectives were met. This discussion includes some comments on the appropriateness of these goals and objectives.

Statement of goals and objectives

In the original project application, the following general goals were specified:

1. to promote literacy as a community value;
2. to promote the use of literacy as a basic condition for local and personal development;
3. to promote the development of local institutions, movements, or associations which will be capable of providing long term continuity in literacy and development activities.

In subsequent project documents, the list of goals was further operationalized to include the following:

1. to increase the level of literacy, especially among women;
2. to encourage the population to read and use their newly acquired literacy and math skills for economic development and improvement of the environment;
3. to use and improve the autonomous literacy structures to insure that literacy will continue;
4. to achieve a sufficient number of mother-tongue literates in each language to insure cultural sustainability;
5. to work closely with the Burkina Faso government in assisting them with their mass literacy efforts.

In the original project application, the following specific objectives were stated;

1. the training of 250 literacy instructors to teach the basic course;
2. the training of 25 literacy instructors to teach the advanced literacy courses;
3. *hold at least 300 basic literacy classes;
4. 2,500 successful graduates of the basic literacy courses;
5. 500 graduates of the advanced literacy courses;
6. the publication of fifty-five (55) titles and 77,250 exemplars of didactic and functional literacy materials;
7. the training of twenty-one (21) supervisors;
8. the construction of three regional literacy centers.

* This number of classes is not explicitly stated in the proposal but has been inferred from other goals and information about class size, expected attrition rates, and expected pass-fail rates.

Appropriateness of project goals and objectives

The stated goals are not inappropriate. Nevertheless, a couple of the goals were too general and/or ambitious to be realistic, especially the goal of achieving literateness as a community value. Similarly, the goal of achieving sufficient literacy to produce long term sustainability is a good goal but beyond the scope of this modest project.

On the other hand, the project objectives seem to have been both appropriate and realistic. As will be noted in the subsequent discussion, project results came very close to matching project objectives. Actually, apart from a problem in learner assessment, most objectives were met or exceeded.

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Project results relative to specific objectives

The following table compares project objectives with actual results.

Table 1. A quantitative comparison of project results with project objectives.

Project results compared to project objectives

	Stated objectives	Project results
Basic literacy instructors	250	274
Advanced literacy instructors	25	21
Basic literacy classes	300	331
Successful graduates (basic)	2,500	1,651/3,145*
Successful graduates (advanced)	500	390
Publications (titles)	55	59
Publications (exemplars)	77,250	32,776
Supervisors trained	21	42
Regional centers constructed	3	3

* Two values for number of successful literacy graduates is given. The second number represents an adjusted estimate of effective literacy. The rationale for this adjustment is explained below.

Comments on the project results in the Table

It is necessary to add some notes of explanation of the results in Table 1 especially for those items which seem to vary somewhat from the initial project objectives.

Successful graduates (basic).

The results of the basic literacy classes (Level 1) are set forth in the following table.

Table 2. Table showing the overall rates of participation and successful completion of the basic literacy classes in the project.

Program achievements - Level 1 (Basic literacy)

	Registered			Finished			Passed		
	M*	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Bissa	676	689	1,365	397	434	831	281	221	502
Bwamu	952	333	1,285	477	208	685	304	75	379
Cerma	812	397	1,209	571	295	866	229	70	299
Karaboro	1,545	425	1,970	1,226	342	1,568	371	100	471
Total A	3,985	1,844	5,829	2,671	1,279	3,950	1,185	466	1,651
Total B									3,145

*M = male and F = female

The objective was 2,500. The result has two values: 1,651 (Total A) and 3,145 (Total B). The first number (1,651) is the number of people officially declared literate in the project. However, one of the findings of the evaluation was that the basic literacy classes included a very rigorous math component including complex division and multiplication. Graduates had to successfully pass **both** the reading and math components to be officially declared literate. For this reason, an adjusted estimate of successful graduates has been provided (3,145) to better reflect actual literacy achievement. This estimate was calculated by assuming that at least two thirds of those who finished the course but failed to pass both sections of the final evaluation still achieved an acceptable level of basic literacy.

Successful graduates (advanced).

According to project records, 820 people enrolled in the advanced literacy classes, 656 finished the classes, and 390 people passed the test for this level. The full data are set forth below in Table 3.

The project objective was for 500 successful graduates. Although there were 656 people who completed the course, only 390 of these actually passed the test. On one hand, the goal was exceeded in that more people completed the course than called for by the project objective. On the other hand, the number passing the final exam was less than the proposed objective. The evaluation did not investigate the reason(s) for this differential for the advanced course.

The pass rates for the advanced classes were significantly higher (59.5%) than those for the beginning classes (41.8%). On the other hand, the percentage of female participants was slightly lower (26.6%) than in the basic classes (31.6%).

Table 3. Table showing the results of the advanced classes for all four components participating in the project.

Program Achievements - Level 2 (Advanced literacy)

	Registered			Enrolled			Passed			Pass rate
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
Bissa	214	141	355	178	108	286	140	73	213	74.5
Bwamu	103	19	122	68	11	79	48	10	58	73.4
Cerma	71	35	106	49	23	72	29	10	39	54.2
Karaboro	214	23	237	197	22	219	71	9	80	36.5
Total	602	218	820	492	164	656	288	102	390	59.5

Publications (exemplars).

The discrepancy here is due to several factors:

1. The projects greatly scaled back the volume of newsletters printed. This reduced the raw count of published exemplars by about 12,000.
2. A considerable body of literature was published with funding from other sources because they were needed before project moneys became available. This accounts for another 17,000 exemplars.
3. The number of copies of many publications was scaled back as more realistic estimates of need emerged observing the pace of program development. This further reduced the number of exemplars by 5–10,000 although it did not greatly reduce the printing cost.
4. Some material was supplied by INA meaning it did not need to be published from project funds.

In sum, the literature goal, in terms of the breadth of literature seems generally to have been met although the sheer volume of material is below that originally projected.

On balance, the quantifiable objectives of the project were satisfactorily met. Subsequent sections will examine in more detail questions of program effectiveness viz. pass rates, program completion, and the participation of women.

Project results relative to general program objectives

1. To promote literacy as a community value.

There is not universal agreement on what this means nor on the measures which indicate that this ideal has been met. General discussions on the matter include a number of salient factors. (1) Basic literacy skills are essential to carrying out the daily activities of life. (2) A literate environment exists (signs, posters, directions, charts, pieces of literature, advertising, etc. are encountered repeatedly throughout the day). (3) Local institutions exist which both use and depend upon literacy for their normal operation. Shirley Brice-Heath has argued (personal communication) that a language community must contain at least two institutions which require literacy before literacy becomes a community value. (4) Literacy is valued to the point that basic education for children becomes a high priority.

By most of these measures, it would seem that this goal has not yet been met in project locations. This is not surprising given that most villagers still live at a subsistence level, existing rates of literacy are very low, and the level of technology commonly found at the village level does not require literacy. Furthermore, most of the evidence suggests that, even under supportive conditions, the attainment of this goal takes about a generation.

The fact that this goal was not specifically met by the project cannot fairly be seen as a measure of project failure. The conditions which support literacy as a community value are complex including education, levels of economic development, institutional development, available literature, and levels of social and institutional complexity. With respect to the present project, it seems appropriate to observe that the road to general literateness must begin somewhere, and the project has provided a solid beginning for the four target communities. The body of local literature has been enlarged, a corps of trained teachers exists, embryonic institutions have been developed, and a group of people in each community has become literate. Some confident first steps have been taken towards literateness as a community value.

2. *To promote the use of literacy for local and personal development.*

Without prolonged observation of those who successfully completed the literacy courses, it is difficult to adequately assess this objective. We are largely dependent on indirect and anecdotal evidence. The indirect evidence includes such factors as the amount of literature being bought and read in the villages (a steady volume of material being bought), the number of people taking the advanced courses (about half of those successfully completing the basic course), the local desire to continue literacy classes even though funding may not be available, the number of people seeking assistance from general development agencies, and the increased likelihood that literacy graduates will venture into entrepreneurship.

Anecdotal evidence included the following accounts. In one village it was reported that two men who had graduated from the literacy class were emboldened to start a small agricultural cooperative growing and marketing vegetables. This was made possible by the math and literacy skills gained in the literacy courses.

In another case, it was reported that a woman who had finished the literacy class was so keen to help others in her compound that she taught four of the six women living there to read over the course of a year's time.

A negative example of the consequences of illiteracy surfaced in another village. An elderly woman had children in the capital city who sent her a potpourri of medicines for her use. When she became sick, she took them all not knowing the difference and nearly died. After being rushed to the hospital to have her stomach pumped out, she has become an advocate of literacy even though she, herself, remains illiterate.

A fourth anecdote had to do with a crippled man who sells cigarettes for a living. Before attending the literacy classes, he was often talked into selling cigarettes on credit with the result that he typically lost money. After taking the literacy classes, he began making notes of who owed how much and for how long. People stopped buying on credit knowing that sooner or later they would have to pay up. As a result, this small vendor now operates a more effective business.

Taken singly, such anecdotes seem unimpressive. But multiplied hundreds and even thousands of times, the cumulative impact upon a community and a nation is more significant.

3. To promote the development of local institutions for long term continuity.

This goal is judged to have been well met. All but one of the languages (Karaboro) involved in the project now have a language sub-commission. Furthermore, each village having a village literacy center now has either a literacy committee or the village delegate and/or elders act as a go-between, i.e. between the villagers and literacy coordinator/SIL. In addition, the corps of supervisors and coordinators in each language project acts as another informal institution promoting literacy.

These local institutions have generally functioned very effectively in the tasks they were assigned. Even so, they still have much to learn to achieve the broader goals of literacy, education, and development. This point will be developed further in later discussions on project strengths and recommendations.

4. To increase the level of literacy especially among women.

The broad subject of increase in literacy has already been addressed. What about the levels of literacy among women? The analysis of project data indicates that about one third (31.6%) of all participants in the basic literacy classes were women. This is a commendable achievement given the cultural and pragmatic challenges which tend to keep women out of literacy classes. While the pass-fail rates for women were lower than those for men, the determination of the women to become literate is evidenced by the fact that a higher percentage of women than men finished each

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basic class relative to the number that enrolled. (See the next section for a further discussion of this matter.)

5. To assist the Burkina Faso government with their mass literacy efforts.

In terms of making progress towards literacy, this goal was met in all four project components. In terms of achieving an effective level of official participation in local language literacy, the goal was satisfactorily met in three of the four components. The fourth component, Karaboro, has largely operated outside the domain of official involvement. The reasons for this are numerous including the working style of the SIL literacy worker, the attitude of the local adult literacy official about language policy, certain isolationist tendencies on the part of the Karaboro people, and an unfortunate incident involving a motorcycle.

Despite these problems, literacy activity in this component flourished. In fact, it was the only component which managed to organized French transition classes. Nonetheless, the situation was not/is not healthy and merits some administrative attention to solve the misunderstandings.

In summary, the goals which were clearly achievable during the time frame of the project have been quite satisfactorily, even admirably achieved given the starting conditions for literacy. The goals which are intrinsically long term will take time to achieve. The one significant problem area is quite solvable and has not precluded program activity.

4. General evaluative assessments

This second section of the evaluative commentary on the project addresses the question of what project elements could and/or should be improved. These comments assume project continuation though the matter of continuation is clearly outside the scope of the present evaluation.

Significant findings

In carrying out the evaluation, a number of features of this particular project stood out which merit comment. These are listed below with additional explanation as needed.

Country-specific findings

1. In the main, there is an open and supportive atmosphere towards mother tongue literacy in the country.

> Official national policy provides good support for mother tongue literacy for adults. In actual practice, however, this has been generally limited to literacy in Moore, Dioula, and Fulfulde, the most widely spoken mother tongues of the country. Nonetheless, higher-level as well as lower-level officials signaled their general belief that the mother tongue is the most effective route to literacy for the rural adult population of the country.

2. The National Literacy Institute (INA) is one of, if not the most effective adult literacy agency in West Africa.

> While INA is not directly involved in grass roots programs (grass roots delivery is through SA, another agency in the Ministry of Education), it does provide good technical support for such programs. The leadership of INA seems capable, energetic, and has a good vision for adult literacy in the country.

3. There is a reasonably effective national apparatus for delivery of adult literacy.

> In Burkina Faso, adult literacy and primary education function together at the provincial level. While this would seem unusual especially in Western countries, it turns out to be quite effective and appropriate in Burkina Faso. This may well be the case because of the high levels of illiteracy in the country as well as the fact that there is still a high degree of ruralization in the country and minimal bilingualism in French, the language of formal education.
>
> While this apparatus is short on funds and technical personnel, it does seem generally amenable to cooperation with NGOs interested in literacy. This attitude has been

obvious in evaluating the present project. In fact, there was some evidence that the official adult literacy apparatus may depend almost too much on NGOs for programmatic activity in adult literacy choosing to let these take the fore in many cases.

I don't see this as a substantial problem as long as all parties seek to work together in carrying out programs in adult literacy.

Project-specific findings (organizationally)

4. In the main, there was solid and constructive cooperation between SIL and SA in carrying out the project.

The level of cooperation evident in the project between SIL and official agencies in carrying out a basic mother tongue literacy program is somewhat unusual. In the more typical case (around the world), SIL linguists and literacy workers have tended to prefer to carry out trial literacy programs more independently because of the tentative and experimental nature of such programs. Conversely, it is commonly the case that national adult literacy agencies lack active, provincial-level staffs able to take a meaningful role in basic mother tongue literacy projects.

Both SIL and official functionaries are to be commended for the evident level of cooperation: SIL for its willingness to do the extra work needed to carry out these projects cooperatively, and INA/SA for its willingness to accommodate itself to the awkwardness of working closely with an expatriate NGO. Even though there were some rough edges, it is my opinion that the partnership has been an effective one.

5. The project benefited enormously from having some very high quality, component-level, project coordinators.

Every project manager looks for key staff to assist in project implementation. This particular project was notable for the outstanding quality of the local personnel who functioned as component level coordinators (i.e., the Bissa component, the Bwamu component, the Cerma component, the Karaboro component). These coordinators have vision, determination,

> technical ability, and integrity. The project owes much to these anonymous but very capable local leaders.

6. There was enthusiasm for the project and project results at the village level.

> Not uncommonly, one sees apathy and indifference among those for whom programs are developed. While literacy is still a "new thing" for many of the villagers targeted by the project, there was evident enthusiasm about literacy. With such enthusiasm, it is rewarding to be a part of a literacy program.

7. There was a fast response time once the project was approved/funded.

> Both SIL and official agencies are to be commended for having project components up and running so quickly. Obviously, there had been previous foundational work done in terms of linguistic research and materials development. Nonetheless, all parties moved quickly and effectively to get the program up and running once funds became available.

Project-specific findings (technically)

There were a few interesting findings at the technical level of the project. These are spelled out below with appropriate comment. In several cases, there will be further analysis of findings in subsequent sections of the evaluation.

8. The overall pass rate was 41.8%, an unusually low rate for a basic literacy program.

> World-wide, most reasonably-managed literacy programs expect a success rate of 65-80%. In this project, the pass rate was only 41.8% for those who finished the course. Relative to those who started (enrolled), the pass rate was only 28.3%, a very low success rate indeed! In general it was noted that very few passed the final evaluation unless *(a)* they had previous experience in the formal school system or *(b)* they had gone through the basic literacy course at least once before. There will be considerable further discussion of this finding in a following section.

9. A higher percentage of women (69.4%) than men (67%) stayed in basic literacy classes for the full season.

> In all four project components, female participants were more likely to stay in the program for the whole season. No one in the project had a clear explanation for this finding although there were a number of hypotheses.

10. Women (36%) were considerably less likely to pass the final evaluation than men (44%).

> Offsetting the advantage identified in Point 9, women were less likely to pass the final evaluation. There were two major hypotheses for this finding. (1) Fewer women than men had experience in the regular school system. (2) Women were less concerned about a certificate formally declaring them literate. Rather, they were satisfied with the knowledge they had gained in the course.

11. In two components—Bissa and Bwamu—there was more than a 20% differential in the pass-fail rates between men and women (favoring men).

> No one had a satisfactory explanation for this finding. The Bissa component has a strong women's program with female teachers and supervisors and a considerable recent history of literacy, yet it had a 20% differential. On the other hand, the most traditional group—the Karaboro—had nearly identical pass-fail rates for men and women. Surely there is an explanation but this evaluation did not uncover one.

12. A significantly higher percentage of people finished in Cerma and Karaboro (15% advantage) compared to Bissa and Bwamu.

> In Karaboro, there are fewer schools available so many see the literacy classes as their only opportunity to learn to read. There was no comparable explanation for Cerma.

13. The ability (financially) and the will to sustain literacy activities without funding support is in question. The evidence encountered suggests that program activity will probably drop off about 75–80%, but basic classes will probably continue at least for some period of time.

It is a goal of most development efforts that conditions be established such that autonomous, sustained activities continue after external support ends. The achievement of such conditions is a delicate blend of many factors including motivation, timing, technical knowledge, leadership, available resources, and supporting social and cultural factors.

In the case of the present project, most of these factors are present although in varying degrees from one project site to another. In the absence of external funding, the factor of available resources probably looms the largest in terms of sustainability. There is motivation, leadership, technical knowledge (for most elements of the project), and supporting cultural conditions. It is for this reason that a prediction of continuing activity at 25% present levels seems reasonable. This estimate could probably be raised but for the rather grim economic situation in the country (average per capita GNP of about $300 dollars).

Notable strengths of the project

Most development projects have definite strengths and weaknesses. This section and the next will identify and contrast the strong and weak features of this project. While the lists of strengths and weakness are about of equal length, the reader should clearly understand that the project is **not** being viewed as a weak or mediocre program. The strong points of the project tend to characterize the project broadly, while the list of weaknesses or problems are generally more technical or of reduced (negative) import to the project.

1. Strong relationship between SIL and DPEBA/SA.

The project was a joint effort of SIL, the NGO, and DPEBA/SA, the provincial-level government agencies responsible for primary education and adult literacy respectively. The division of roles and responsibilities was generally as follows:

DPEBA/SA provided:	SIL provided:
Routine teacher training	Linguistic research
Learner evaluation	Initial teacher training
Certification	Materials
Some supervision	Village-level coordination
Some generic materials	Project management services

This seems to have worked quite well even though there were a few rough edges and some details fell through the cracks of undefined responsibility. The relationship or partnership seems to be one which can be built upon more broadly for a sustained attack upon the problem of illiteracy in the country.

2. The existence of local language committees in each project component (except Karaboro).

A strong feature of the project is the existence of local language committees. These committees are a first step in building a local institutional base for sustained literacy and other development activities at the village level.

There are two levels of such committees; language committees (higher level) and village literacy committees (lower level). This two-level structure provides, on the one hand, a body of recognized authority to speak for the entire people group on matters related to language and literacy, and on the other hand, a grass roots level of organization capable of providing support and delivery at the village level.

This has been an effective strategy for beginning to "indigenize" literacy and associated development activities in the target communities. It is a model worthy of emulation in similar projects elsewhere.

3. High quality leadership in project components, especially local project coordinators.

This point has already been touched on in the previous section. As with the preceding point, it is worth noting that such leadership augurs well for continued project activity and substantial project expansion should needed resources be made available.

4. Formal learner evaluation at the end of each season.

It is not uncommon in literacy programs that learners are certified as literate solely on the basis of having completed the class. In fact, in some more "pell-mell" campaigns, people have been counted as literate merely for having registered for the classes.

In good programs, some testing or evaluation process is implemented whereby program participants are tested to determine whether they have truly become literate. This was the case in the present project. Roughly speaking, a generic achievement test is given to all course graduates to determine whether they can officially be certified as literate. A test covering reading skills, dictation, and competence in math was devised and given to all graduates. Those who passed were given certificates indicating successful completion of the basic literacy courses.

Responsibility for devising, administering, and evaluating the tests fell primarily to the provincial adult education officer (SA). This official was assisted by the SIL linguist or the project coordinator since most of the SA officials are not speakers of the language(s) spoken in the province of assignment.

5. A single common instructional model for the basic literacy materials.

All of the beginning didactic materials for reading instruction use the same instructional model, an eclectic method with a functional literacy orientation. The use of a common model was especially helpful to the SA staff who were officially responsible for instructional content (although they were not directly involved in primer construction). The use of a familiar model facilitated their role in program supervision.

6. A strong linguistic base for the beginning didactic materials.

All of the languages being used in the literacy classes are recently written languages. Therefore, a substantial amount of linguistic work has had to be done to support the literacy effort. This work has been carried out by SIL linguists and seems very adequate for the immediate purposes of literacy. Not only do the materials appear to be linguistically sound, but the mere fact that literacy is being done in the mother tongue appears to have a galvanizing effect on the local people. In the evaluation, the point was repeatedly made that "now we can become real citizens because we are literate and our languages are real languages because they've been written."

These attitudinal impacts are important both at the human level as well as at the institutional level. A small, multilingual country like Burkina Faso needs to effectively engage its citizenry if it is to develop. Those who have participated in this literacy project appear to represent a constructive addition to the fabric of national life because of what they have learned.

7. Strong participation on the part of women in the program.

One of the major goals of the project was that of raising the level of literacy among the female population. This is in keeping with a major international thrust to give special attention to the needs of women in developing countries. The profile of female participation in the basic literacy classes is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Female participation in the project as a percentage of total participation in the project.

Rates of female participation in basic literacy classes

	Registered		Finished		Passed	
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
Bissa	689	50.5	434	52.2	221	44.0
Bwamu	333	25.9	208	30.4	75	19.8
Cerma	397	32.8	295	34.1	70	23.4
Karaboro	425	21.6	342	21.8	100	21.2
Total	1844	31.6	1279	32.4	466	28.2

While overall, the level of female participation in the project is quite high relative to initial projects in similar cultural conditions elsewhere, the results were not evenly spread through all four project components.

Overall, the rate of female participation was 31.6% of the total. For the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the area, this would be considered very good although it still leaves women under-represented in the project.

The Bissa project somewhat distorts the picture, however, as more than 50% of the participants in this group were women, leaving the others with participation rates around 25%. The lowest rates of participation were in Bwamu and Karaboro, the two groups which are the most traditional, and which have the lowest current indices of children in school.

It is noteworthy to observe that, percentage-wise, more women than men finished the basic literacy classes. This is a clear indicator that the women are motivated for literacy and will go to considerable lengths to become literate. The project is to be commended for having involved so many women at

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this early stage though much remains to be done to put a dent in the problem of female illiteracy.

8. A strong math component in the beginning literacy class.

It has become a de facto norm to include a math component in basic literacy classes although this still does not happen universally. The present project has a strong math component in the basic classes as well as in the advanced classes. In fact, this component may even have been too strong. More will be said on this later.

9. Good record keeping and information flow.

It is very common in small-scale literacy projects that basic record keeping and information flow are inadequate. By contrast, the present project has done a good, even excellent, job of record keeping. Whether this is an artifact of the French penchant for keeping detailed records or merely a commitment to good information on the part of the project staffs is not clear. What is clear is that good information flow exists on the project including such areas as details on class attendance, test scores, and teacher evaluations.

10. Strong financial management on the part of SIL.

Because the grant was to SIL as an international NGO, this agency was responsible for the management of funds. An examination of the project budget and look at the financial records and record-keeping system indicate that this aspect of the project was handled fairly and professionally.

There was an instance of theft or loss when a national contractor hired to build one of the literacy centers was found guilty of misuse of funds. This was caught early in the job and the man was prosecuted, found guilty, and ordered to repay the money stolen. Unfortunately, the man disappeared and authorities are still looking for him.

Otherwise, financial management was handled very well.

Specific problems identified

A number of problems were identified which, if handled, would smooth out areas of irregularity and further strengthen project function and impact. Most of these problems are addressed with specific recommendations so will only be identified and briefly discussed here. None of the problems identified seriously impaired project operation.

1. The instructional season is very short and intense.

> Since the early 1980s, Burkina Faso has followed the tradition of holding short, intense literacy classes during the hot, dry season from January to April. The goal is to have at least 300 hours of instruction during this period. It is frequent that this goal is met by having forty to forty-eight class days in which learners meet for six to eight hours per day. This is an extraordinarily heavy schedule especially for people not used to sitting in a classroom at all, let alone for six hours a day.
>
> When one adds to this intense schedule the fact that classes meet in non-air-conditioned buildings with ambient temperatures of 100–115 degrees F., one should not be surprised that instructional effectiveness is sharply reduced.
>
> The counter argument is that, during this period of time, people are not otherwise occupied in normal subsistence activities. Once the rains start, everyone becomes preoccupied with farming activities.

2. There is a general problem of coordination because of communication problems (e.g. lack of telephones, lack of vehicles [on the part of DPEBA and SA staffs], and long distances to travel).

> In a certain sense, this is an obvious and expected problem. It is to be assumed that communication will be difficult in an under-developed country. In this particular case, the problem takes on an added dimension because of the cooperative nature of the project. When multiple agencies are involved, the need for effective communication increases. The lack of communication lead to visible though not usually serious breakdowns in areas such as supervision, evaluation, and problem-solving.

3. Teachers with no educational background caused some weaknesses in the quality of the instruction, especially early in the project's life span.

In the earliest phase of the project, people were chosen to be teachers who had no previous teaching experience and little or no educational background in the formal school system. As a result, even though they received basic training in the teacher training courses, some of these people were ineffectual as literacy instructors. The problem tended to be ameliorated as the project proceeded and the pool of teachers expanded.

4. The inter-relationship between the SIL teams and provincial officials (DPEBA and SA) was not always clear.

The project was designed to be a cooperative effort between SIL and DPEBA/SA. However, project implementation proceeded without a careful spelling out of respective responsibilities between SIL and DPEBA/SA staffs. As a result, there was a certain amount of confusion, different understandings as to who was responsible for what, and a certain number of details which simply "fell through the cracks." In some cases, an extra effort to handle misunderstandings between SIL personnel and official personnel solved these problems. In other cases, they remained largely unresolved.

5. The basic instructional design is not well suited for minimally trained or unsophisticated teachers (literacy instructors).

The basic instructional model used in the primers in the project was specified by INA. The method is an eclectic method popular for many adult education programs. The advantage of this approach is that it maximizes learner participation and sense of accomplishment. The down side is that the method usually requires more sophisticated and better-trained teachers. In this particular project, the average educational level of the teachers was probably two to three years (counting the literacy classes as a year). Teachers with this level of experience generally need a more structured method of instruction to function effectively.

The director of INA recognized this problem and indicated that the agency was planning to take an in-depth look at the matter. The problem is not a simple one as many materials already exist, existing teachers and supervisors are familiar with the method, and it seems generally adequate to the task.

6. Cooperating provincial officials had minimal orientation on the basic objectives of the project.

> The original project proposal was developed by SIL with only nominal input from the National Literacy Institute. SIL sought and secured project funding. As a consequence, there was a reduced sense of "buy-in" or ownership on the part of local provincial officials who were to be partners in project implementation.

7. The sustainability objective is vastly too optimistic and needs stronger conceptualization.

> The conditions of internal sustainability are still somewhat ephemeral. What is known for certain is that self-sustainability typically requires ten to twenty years. The stated goal of achieving sustainability in two (2) years was not realistic. Still, it should be noted that this has/had little to do with effective project implementation.

8. Almost across the board, there is/was not enough post-season literacy activity to keep new literacy skills sharp.

> It is widely reported in literacy projects in developing countries that not enough post-literacy material exists to keep reading skills sharp. In this particular project, there was more post-literacy material available than one normally encounters. The more serious problem, however, is that most villages do not represent a "literate environment." There are few signs, posters, advertisements, newspapers, bulletin boards, or charts which stimulate even nominal amounts of reading.
>
> The problem is further compounded by the somewhat informal division of the year into a "learning season" and a "working season." During the learning season, the learner is intensely involved with print. In the working season, such involvement is almost nil.

9. There is considerable variation in the interpretation and application of national language policies at the provincial level.

While the national language policy states that literacy should be supported in all of the national languages of the country, the vast majority of such work has been in just three languages: Moore, Dioula, and Fulfulde. During the evaluation, it was found that some adult education specialists have come to accept—consciously or unconsciously—that these three languages are the only ones really worthy of literacy activity. Implicitly or explicitly, speakers of other languages ought to limit themselves to literacy in one of these three languages. This attitude entirely misses the point that, for speakers of language X, Moore or Dioula are just as inaccessible as French or English.

For others, there is concern that mother tongue literacy will lead to ethnic conflict and separatism. Worldwide, there is little evidence that this happens unless other compelling conditions also occur such as political and economic discrimination.

For the project, the consequence of this variability was uneven support for some components of the project. This was most evident in the Cerma and Karaboro projects where there was not only benign neglect of some project literacy activities, but even a little covert rivalry paying Karaboro speakers to attend Dioula literacy classes rather than the Karaboro literacy classes. While this did not seriously disrupt or compromise the Karaboro literacy classes, it did send negative signals to the Karaboro project staff.

10. There was considerable variation in the experience and style of the SIL literacy teams.

Even though SIL has a reasonably adequate system in place for providing consultant and technical support to its project teams, this cannot overcome the fact that some of the project staff were newly arrived in the country and had little experience. While the technical components of the project were not compromised, there was some impact on coordination and integration with the DPEBA/SA apparatus.

11. There is some evidence that the evaluation process is not even among all the provinces.

Responsibility for the evaluation of learners falls to the province level adult education officer. One result is that there is considerable variation in the testing standard from one province to another. In the case of Bissa, for example, the people are scattered in two different provinces so that two different provincial officers are involved in developing evaluation instruments. The result was a significantly different pass-fail rate in one province than the other, because the evaluation metric was more rigorous in one than the other.

12. The math component of the basic literacy courses is too rigorous causing unnecessarily high fail rates on the final learner evaluations.

It is highly desirable to have a good numeracy component in any basic literacy class. Learners need to master basic facts and processes in addition and subtraction, telling time, handling cash transactions, and understanding the use of weights and measures.

In this project, however, the math component, which is a national curriculum component, went well beyond basic numeracy including not only complex addition and subtraction problems, but also the full gamut of division and multiplication processes.

It was widely observed that very few first-time learners master all of this math. Those who pass the math section of the examination are almost always those who have been to formal school classes or who have taken the literacy classes at least once before.

Given that simple electronic calculators are available everywhere in the country for a couple of dollars, it seems totally inappropriate to put such a heavy emphasis on math thus significantly depressing success rates in the literacy classes.

Project design

For the most part, the project design was realistic and appropriate to the situation. The design glossed over or understated the necessary linguistic research which needed to be done to make the project possible. Since this work had already been done by SIL as a part of its normal program, there was probably not a felt need to add this component to the project design. Even so, it is helpful to grantors and others who review project designs to be aware of the role that such work has in basic literacy projects in linguistically diverse nations.

As discussed elsewhere in this evaluation, a couple of the goals stated for the project were far too ambitious to actually be achieved within the time span of the project. This observation applies most specifically to those goals which have to do with such areas as process–achieving literateness as a community value and having a significant impact on local development. While the project represented significant first steps in the accomplishment of these goals, full or visible attainment is five to twenty years away.

The technical design of the project was very suitable. The evaluation showed project implementation closely approximated project design.

Project administration and management

Since the project was based on a grant to SIL as an NGO, SIL assumed lead-agency responsibility in carrying out the project. At the implementational level, however, responsibility was shared between SIL, INA, and DPEBA/SA.

Within SIL, the administration of SIL-Burkina Faso assumed general administrative oversight. On behalf of the SIL administration, Mrs. Olivia Tottle of SIL, was given responsibility for general project coordination. The accounting department of SIL, under the leadership of Sharon Thompson, handled—very well, in fact—the financial management of project funds. General operational responsibility was assumed by the SIL teams assigned to the language projects which corresponded to project components: Bissa, Bwamu, Cerma, and Karaboro.

This somewhat decentralized management structure worked for the most part, but it is not optimal for this kind of project. It would have been desirable to have someone on SIL's part who had direct administrative responsibility for the project. Having a project administrator would/could have solved some of the low-level problems of misunderstanding between SIL teams and DPEBA staffs working at the component level. Such a manager would also have been in a position to interface directly with INA to strengthen that working relationship and to handle some of the technical issues which arose in project implementation.

5. Cost and cost effectiveness

According to project records, project expenditures were as listed in the following table.

Table 5. A breakdown of budgetary allocations in the project.

Financial profile

(All figures given in Canadian Dollars)

	Amount	Percent of total
Training	$11,715	3.9%
Materials & supplies	61,936	20.5%
Supervision & coordination	32,820	10.8%
Facilities & equipment	43,380	14.3%
Teacher reimbursement	28,460	9.4%
Research & development	50,000	16.5%
Operations	32,530	10.7%
Technical support	10,000	3.3%
General administration	25,457	8.4%
Evaluation	6,500	2.1%
TOTAL	302,798	100%

Several points are worth making about this profile of expenditures. First, the amount allocated to teacher reimbursement is a low percentage of the total budget. Teachers received only a nominal honorarium for their teaching. While all teachers would like to get paid more, there was a general recognition in the project that work as a teacher was really a form of community service. This helped substantially to hold down program costs.

Secondly, the research and development costs, in combination with the cost of materials constituted just over one third of the total budget. The research and development costs were borne entirely by SIL as its contribution to the project. The materials, on the other hand, were published entirely from actual cash input into the project. Relative to Canadian cash input, this item amounted to about 50% of the total budget. Obviously, this is one reason why mother tongue literacy programs are sometimes viewed as unacceptably expensive.

Thirdly, training costs were comparatively small. These costs were held down by *(a)* keeping training sessions short, *(b)* not paying trainees during the time of the training, and *(c)* encouraging the village literacy committees to pay transportation costs to the training site as their contribution to the project.

In this project, what did it cost to achieve literacy for those participating in the project? How does this cost compare to other projects and programs? The key data are set forth in the following table. Total project cost was $302,000 Canadian while actual external cash input was $132,000 Canadian.

Table 6. Per student costs in the project, Community-based literacy, Burkina Faso, from 1993-95

Cost Effectiveness - Basic Literacy

(Figures adjusted to reflect US dollars)

Literates	Cost basis	Cost per enrollee	Cost per finisher	Cost per passer
Reported	Cash Input	$15.62	$23.05	$55.15
(1651)	Total cost	$38.58	$59.93	$136.20
Adjusted	Cash Input	$15.62	$23.05	$28.95
(3145)	Total cost	$38.58	$59.93	$71.50

In Table 6, the cost per student has been broken down in several ways. First, there are two major divisions based on reported success rates versus the adjusted success rates. This distinction is based upon the observation made elsewhere in this evaluation that the evaluation process used in the project considerably distorted project success in terms of those who became effectively literate. Also, there is a division between "cash input" and "total cost." The latter includes various in-kind contributions by the participating agencies and villages. The factors for "cash input" are limited to actual grant funds and other external moneys invested in the project.

The table is further sub-divided to show cost per enrollee, per finisher, and per literate (as reported by two different metrics). Of primary interest is the cost per literate, a metric sometimes used to calculate the overall investment cost of literacy. This metric may also be used to compare literacy programs for internal efficiency.

The cost factors of greatest interest are in the right-most column. At the one extreme we note a cost-per-literate of $136.20. This figure is based upon the most conservative number for literates (based on a relatively rigorous examination) as well as a maximal accounting of project inputs including many in-kind project inputs. This cost is somewhat high by normal SIL and other NGO standards

($50–75), but is well below costs reported for the Experimental World Literacy Project ($300–350 dollars per literate).

If we take the more realistic estimate of literates from the project (3,145) we note a total cost of $71.50, again based on a maximal estimate of project costs. Based solely on external cash inputs, the cost-per-literate is reduced to $28.95. In either case, this cost per literate is quite favorable and demonstrates an acceptable level of internal efficiency in achieving results. If the project had continued for another year or two, the cost factors would have been even more favorable as there were high front end costs in getting this project launched. Cost per literate for the next two years could easily be half that reported here.

These data also provide an indication that the cost-per-literate in Burkina Faso need not be exorbitant. In fact, even with no allowance for efficiencies of scale, we can roughly estimate that the cost of achieving universal adult literacy in Burkina Faso would be in the range of $115–286 million.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations address specific issues identified during the evaluation process. Most of the recommendations address matters very specific to the project and its continuation. However, a few recommendations of a more general nature have also been included which go beyond the immediate project to the broader context in which the project took place. It is recognized that this liberty, in a certain sense, goes beyond the mandate of the evaluation. Nonetheless, it has seemed appropriate to include these recommendations as both SIL and INA will be continuing their work in literacy in Burkina Faso. Furthermore, the evaluation is not just an academic exercise, but is linked, however tenuously, to the long term future of the country and people of Burkina Faso. For this reason, there is a certain moral urgency to promoting steps which speak to this future.

General recommendations

1. Experiment with a longer instructional season.

It is recommended that official agencies seriously investigate the option of a longer instructional season (six to eight months for example). The suggested advantages are: *(a)* less intensity thus more effective learning; *(b)* a more prolonged exposure to print over the course of the year thus more reinforcement and less loss during the "off season."

At the same time, it is recognized that there may be some significant disadvantages as well: *(a)* higher cost because of more supervisory time needed; *(b)* a greater tendency to not stay in classes when fields are further away from the village.

The director of INA reported that there had already been some experimentation with a longer instructional season with poor results. However, there was not time to discuss the full circumstances of these experiments to determine whether there were other identifiable explanations for the reduced effectiveness.

2. Develop written working agreements between SIL project staff and provincial-level DPEBA/SA officers.

As the project was implemented, agreements with DPEBA/SA officers were almost entirely oral. This allowed for substantial slippage in follow through. To solve this problem, **it is recommended that there be a written agreement or plan of action between SIL teams and DPEBA/SA officers**. These agreements would spell out plans for the coming literacy season, would indicate who was responsible for what activities, and would provide a written record of plans for the year. Such written agreements should be filed with appropriate administrative staffs in both agencies.

3. Develop some means of insuring a higher level of equivalence among the various literacy examinations.

It is recommended that the National Literacy Institute, in coordination with relevant entities, make an effort to define a generalized basic literacy skills test for use throughout the country. An attempt should be made to have approximately the same number of questions or exercises in each test component, to have equivalence in the level of difficulty of the questions, and to verify the linguistic validity of the questions posed on the test.

4. Do some joint planning when literacy programs are under consideration.

SIL, INA, DPEBA, and SA have been cooperating in the execution of this literacy project. It is quite likely that all four will continue to be jointly involved in future literacy programming. SIL has a contract with the Ministry of Education. Therefore, it would seem most appropriate that, where literacy programming is concerned, all agencies would benefit from some joint strategic planning. **Therefore, it is recommended that the agencies concerned seek to do some joint planning whenever literacy programs are being developed in which all will be involved in the execution**.

Each agency brings unique strengths, resources, and perspectives to literacy programming. All stand to benefit from joint participation in planning sessions with respect to literacy programs.

Project-specific technical recommendations

1. Rethink/expand the role and function of the language committees incorporating where feasible the literacy apparatus.

A stated goal of the project was to begin developing local infrastructures and institutions capable of providing long term support for literacy activity at the language and village level. To this end, the present project made very good progress in organizing language-level as well as village-level committees wherever literacy classes took place. In addition to these committees, a delivery apparatus was also developed under the aegis of SIL and DPEBA/SA.

The committees can be considered the "political" arm of local literacy with the delivery apparatus (coordinator, supervisors, teachers) being the "technical" arm of local literacy. Both of these "arms," as local institutions, proved quite effective in carrying out their respective tasks.

However, in the short life span of the project, these two "arms" had only token levels of integration.

To better achieve the project ideals of local autonomy and sustainability, there is a need for stronger integration of the political and technical components of the project. **Therefore, it is recommended that SIL and/or SA officers seek ways to achieve a higher level of integration of these two local functions.**

2. Provide further training for inexperienced literacy instructors.

One problem encountered was that of inexperienced teachers being assigned to teach basic literacy classes. While this problem was greater in the earlier phases of the project, it may be a continuing problem in that teachers are typically nominated by village committees and may or may not have adequate background or experience.

Accordingly, **it is recommended that, when such teacher candidates come, appropriate adjustments be made to the training requirements for such teachers**. This might include extra sessions of practice teaching, or even a time (a season) of being mentored in a class before assuming full responsibility for a class.

3. Include much more supplementary drill material in the basic literacy classes to complement the instructional method being used.

The basic instructional method used (an eclectic method) is generally workable, especially when handled by capable and experienced teachers, but could be made considerably more effective with the addition of some supplemental drill material. **Therefore, it is recommended that attention be given by technical staff at INA and by other training staffs to the development of a generic set of supplemental drills or exercises which can be easily and routinely add to each basic lesson by the teacher.**

This need not entail modifications of the primer materials. Rather, teachers can be trained to create and apply a simple set of supplementary exercises to enhance the quality of the instruction for beginning readers.

4. Develop and include a stronger writing component in the advanced literacy classes (level 2).

> The field of reading instruction is becoming increasingly aware that writing supports reading. It was noticed during the evaluation that the present instructional system puts little emphasis on writing (neither form writing nor creative writing). The inclusion of a stronger writing component (probably in the second level classes) would serve two purposes: (1) reinforcing and strengthening reading/writing skills and (2) adding to the body of potential literature available to be used in the community.
>
> **Therefore, it is recommended that the curriculum designers give attention to developing ways in which more writing can be incorporated in the second level curriculum.**

Recommendations to SIL

1. This kind of a project needs to have a full time project director with direct administrative responsibility for the project.

> This project functioned without a full-time person having direct administrative responsibility for the project. There was a project coordinator who handled very general matters such as record keeping, reporting, very basic coordinational issues, and the logistics of the evaluation. Most of the direct responsibility for project implementation was devolved to the SIL and SA staffs working at the component or provincial level. The SIL administration was available to solve major problems when such arose.
>
> As it turned out, there were not many major problems which had to be solved so this approach worked. However, it is not a strong model of project administration and did leave a fair number of nagging problems unresolved.
>
> **Therefore, it is recommended (to the SIL administration) that such projects have a full-time project director to oversee all aspects of project implementation.** A commitment to provide such a director should be one of the significant considerations in applying for grant moneys to carry out such projects in the future.

2. Updating current proposals for literacy and development.

Following the successful completion of the current project SIL has already developed and circulated a follow-up funding proposal. The new proposal was reviewed during the time of the evaluation although this was not explicitly a part of the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. Since the new proposal had been developed before the evaluation was carried out, it had no access to the findings of the evaluation. Now that the formal evaluation has been completed, two recommendations with respect to the new funding proposal are germane.

First, it would be both appropriate and highly desirable to update the new project proposal based on the findings of this evaluation. This could be accomplished either by updating the document itself, or by circulating this evaluation as an emendation to the new proposal.

Secondly, some consideration should be given to broadening any new program design (for literacy) to include more explicit development components along lines addressed in the final section of this evaluation ("Literacy and Development"). While SIL is not specifically a development agency in the narrower sense of the term, it is clear, at the same time, that Burkina Faso will be facing significant developmental challenges in the not-too-distant future. Therefore, it would seem appropriate that any project which falls in the general category of development–including literacy—should include at least some components addressing some of the broader development needs of the populace.

Recommendation to potential donors

1. Further investment in mother tongue literacy.

It is a facile thing (and politically correct) for a politician, policy maker, or development specialist to espouse 100% literacy. It is quite another to allocate funds to universal literacy when there are so many competing demands for limited available funding.

Should major donors consider additional funding for literacy in Burkina Faso? Is literacy important to the country? Would such money be wasted? Burkina Faso is an interesting case, and the present literacy project and accompanying evaluation shed at least some light on the question of future development funding in the country.

Eighty percent of the population live by subsistence agriculture. The carrying capacity of the land has already been exceeded. Current rates of adult literacy are not more than 15% (less according to the Minister of Education). The current school system is not a solution in terms of impacting current literacy rates. The population continues to grow at a rate of just under 3 percent per year, a fact which will lead to a 50 percent increase in population in the next 15 years and a doubling of the population in the next 25 years.

The net result is that the country is currently "locked into a pattern of development options" which will, over the next ten to fifteen years, lead to severe ecological degradation, further desertification, and widespread famine. The widespread lack of literacy almost guarantees this eventual scenario. The only doubt is the timing. The only solution is a wholesale commitment to alternative models of resource use **and** family planning.

On the positive side, Burkina Faso is a country with above average resilience and spirit. It still receives a good supply of rain for a Sahelian country. What it lacks is a population with the conceptual tools and models to restructure itself and its relationship to the land. Such tools are based on basic literacy and numeracy. (See the following section on literacy and development for a more detailed explanation of this conceptual linkage.)

It appears that there are three options: spend modest amounts of money now for programs of basic literacy and development; spend larger amounts of money later in programs of emergency assistance after large scale disaster; do nothing and let the country slowly disintegrate from the combined weight of scarcity and over-population.

None of these is an especially attractive option. Most donor nations and agencies have plenty of internal problems to solve without worrying about the needs of other parts of the world. Donors wish to see emerging nations develop the skill and initiative to solve their own problems and have invested substantial resources in an effort to see this happen. Informed observers note that Burkina Faso is one of the emerging nations which has handled itself reasonably well with respect to development needs. Still, it is the view of this observer that the future of the nation, while not currently grim, is not very bright either. Perhaps most haunting, is the belief that a timely investment now of the right sort could go far towards tilting the odds in a favorable direction for the people of Burkina Faso.

Therefore, it is a recommendation of this report that development donors interested in Burkina Faso seek to fund informed literacy/development projects having a tripartite focus on literacy/basic adult education, family planning, and the creation of effective alternative models of rural resource utilization.

7. The issue of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso.

A primary justification for adult literacy is that it is presumed to be a foundational (necessary but not sufficient) condition for development. The Terms of Reference for this evaluation suggested that it might also be appropriate to consider the possible place of mother tongue education in the mix of literacy and development. This seems appropriate given that the country of Burkina Faso is now seriously studying mother tongue education as an alternative model to the existing system. In fact, some experimental projects are already being tested.

For strategic purposes, a nation's educational policy makers must think in terms of an educational system designed to meet the general economic, political, and moral needs of the country. Most ex-colonial nations inherited educational systems designed to meet the needs of the colonial power. Some of these ex-colonial nations are now beginning to wrestle with the question of appropriateness of such models to their unique situations. Burkina Faso is just one of these countries.

The argument for mother tongue education

Most arguments for mother tongue education are based more narrowly on issues of ethnic identity and educational effectiveness. In the case of Burkina Faso, there is a much more complex and overarching case to be made for the importance of mother tongue education in the development of the country. The essential argument runs like this:

Given that, in the sphere of education:

> About 80% of the population of Burkina Faso is rural, living in 8,000 traditional villages scattered around the country;
>
> Only 50–60% of rural villages have schools;
>
> Only about 35% of school-aged children ever begin school;
>
> By the end of the 4th level, only 15.5% of the age cohort remains in school (see Appendix 3 for a graph of typical patterns of school leaving in Burkina Faso.);
>
> It appears that at least four years of schooling are required to maintain literacy into adulthood.

Therefore:

The present education system would appear to effectively institutionalize adult illiteracy at about the 85% level nationwide.

Is the current educational system meeting the long terms needs of this country? This seems debatable. The continued high rate of adult illiteracy, the lack of jobs for educated graduates, and village-level non-participation in the educational process are all factors suggesting the need for a fundamental reconceptualization of education in Burkina Faso. The following set of facts lend support to this conclusion.

Given that, in the economic sphere:

> The carrying capacity of the land has already been exceeded (assuming the current pattern of land usage);
>
> Exploitable natural resources to support economic development on a large scale are not known to exist;

A classical education in French prepares one to work primarily in an urban and technological environment;

Burkina Faso can not presently support large-scale urbanization;

UNESCO figures demonstrate a clear relationship between level of education and birth rates.

Therefore, what is needed is:

An educational strategy which achieves much higher levels of participation and retention especially for females (at least five years);

An education which is oriented to rural life and economics;

An education which directly addresses the developmental needs of the country.

Conclusion

The best prescription would seem to be a mother tongue education program with a high level of village integration and a very pragmatic curriculum tailored specifically to the development needs of the country.

Such a system would be little short of a total reinvention of education in Burkina Faso. On the one hand, this would seem a very radical step to take. On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly clear that radical changes are probably necessary.

In its favor, Burkina Faso is a country with a history of pursuing unconventional solutions to its problems. It is also a country with more than the normal amount of passion for self-help, national pride, and a willingness to mobilize the populace for national causes.

8. Literacy and development:

The case of swidden agriculturists in an overextended ecosystem

Introduction

The project being evaluated is very much a "simple" literacy project. While it is generally assumed that such a project has, or will have, broader developmental implications, there were no overt development components (so defined) in the project. Yet, at least, or especially in the case of Burkina Faso, there are potentially profound developmental implications of a persistent pattern of illiteracy. In fact, a case can be made that the future of the country is probably riding on a satisfactory solution to a problem complex including illiteracy as a key element.

The following brief analysis attempts to specify the key elements of this problem complex. While the project being evaluated made no claim to being a clear and obvious solution to the problems which exist, the evaluation process evoked by the project may, in fact, provide some insight into the broader issues at stake.

Literacy and development in Burkina Faso

In almost any setting, it is relatively easy to observe developmental benefits of literacy at the level of the individual and/or his immediate family. Such benefits are much harder to project systemically for a whole nation. Burkina Faso, however, is an interesting case where the relationship may be easier to model. Consider the following line of reasoning.

Roughly 80% of the population of Burkina Faso are swidden agriculturists (slash-and-burn agriculture). Swidden agricultural systems have the following characteristics:

- decision making about resource utilization is highly fragmented (usually at the level of the individual farmer);
- available resources (e.g., land, water, wood, plant and animal life, minerals, and energy sources) are not manipulated in a reasoned manner, they are used or consumed as encountered and needed;
- the knowledge/technology base is very flat or thin;
- the level of abstractness (models, planning, profit, cost-benefit) is usually minimal;
- there is little sense or explicit knowledge of the interrelatedness of natural systems.

Swidden agriculture is a simple and energy-efficient subsistence system **as long as** there is enough land available to support the existing population. In the case of Burkina Faso, it is said that the land needed to support a given family unit is fifteen to twenty times the amount of land needed to support the same family for one year. In essence, each piece of land needs fifteen to twenty years to recuperate from previous use.

The critical problem for swidden systems is that of carrying capacity. What happens when the population reaches the level where it is no longer possible to leave land fallow for the needed fifteen to twenty years? The land slowly becomes exhausted supporting fewer and fewer people. Erosion and desertification occur. Famine looms.

The carrying capacity of Burkina Faso is estimated to be about 7 million people. The population is nearing 10 million. Farmers already report that land is having to be abandoned because it is worn out. The present model of land utilization cannot long sustain the (current and growing) population of Burkina Faso, to say nothing of supporting economic development. There is little choice but to begin developing alternative agricultural or economic models for the country.

It would seem that a wholesale, nationwide solution must incorporate most or all of the following elements.

- The rural farmer must learn to **manipulate** (not simply use or abuse) the available resources in a constructive manner especially water and energy resources. That is, he must learn to do long range planning, and to work cooperatively with others.
- One or several abstract models must be developed of how to use the available resources more effectively. Various such models exist but will require a combination of public and private initiative to identify, test, and diffuse them.
- There must be a coordinated use of available resources with some differentiation of tasks and rewards.
- Rural farmers will have to be trained in the use of various techniques and strategies for manipulating abstract models and symbols (e.g., planning, coordination, calculation of benefits, debts, shared obligations, and all forms of problem analysis).

To summarize, the following steps seem essential to securing long term national well-being.

- Population growth must be slowed down.
- Water resources must be harnessed and managed on both national and micro levels.
- Steps must be taken to protect and strengthen soil resources.
- The land must be used both directly (planting crops) and indirectly (e.g., trees and forage).
- A more complex and efficient model of land use must be developed.
- Wide-spread but low-technology irrigation needs to be developed.

How are any of these things to be accomplished? What does literacy and education have to do with any of these proposed steps? The evidence of many countries and people groups is that little of this is possible apart from basic literacy and probably some education. Literacy and education provide one with the conceptual and computational tools needed to deal with the higher level of systemic complexity entailed in a differentiated and planned agricultural system. And since the vast majority of the population of Burkina Faso is monolingual in a local language, it seems that mother tongue literacy and/or education is an essential ingredient in the developmental future of Burkina Faso.

9. Bibliography

Bhola, H.S. 1990. Evaluating "literacy for development" projects, programs, and campaigns. UNESCO Institute for Education and German Foundation for International Development. Hamburg, Germany.

Dave, Ravindra H. 1980. "A built-in system of evaluation for reform projects and programmes in education." *International Review of Education*, Vol. 26 No. 4, pp. 475–482.

Appendix 1

Terms of Reference

The following is the stated Terms of Reference given to the evaluator for the purposes of this project evaluation.

To conduct an evaluation of the 1993–1995 project plan of the Community-based Literacy Program of SIL in Burkina Faso specifically:

1. To review and comment on the longer-term objectives of the program, together with the approach and methods used to achieve these objectives. The stated project goals were to promote literacy as a community value and as a basic condition for local and personal development. Organizationally, the approach used attempts to set up local and regional structures, i.e., language literacy committees which can take full responsibility for all literacy and associated development activities in their community. As designed this now includes three components: basic literacy, functional literacy, and bridging into French (the official language). Other components, for example use of mother tongue languages in schools/formal education, may or should be added if essential for achieving the longer-term goals of the program.

2. To review the results obtained for each of the four language groups included in the program, i.e., Bissa, Bwamu, Cerma, and Karaboro taking into account the initial conditions of each language group as well as any conditions specific to each group which (may) have affected the results obtained.

3. To review program structure, management, and administration including procedures for training, teaching, supervision, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. This should include a discussion of SIL's role and the essential services it provides in program planning, management, and implementation as well as in relating to government agencies and networking with other NGOs.

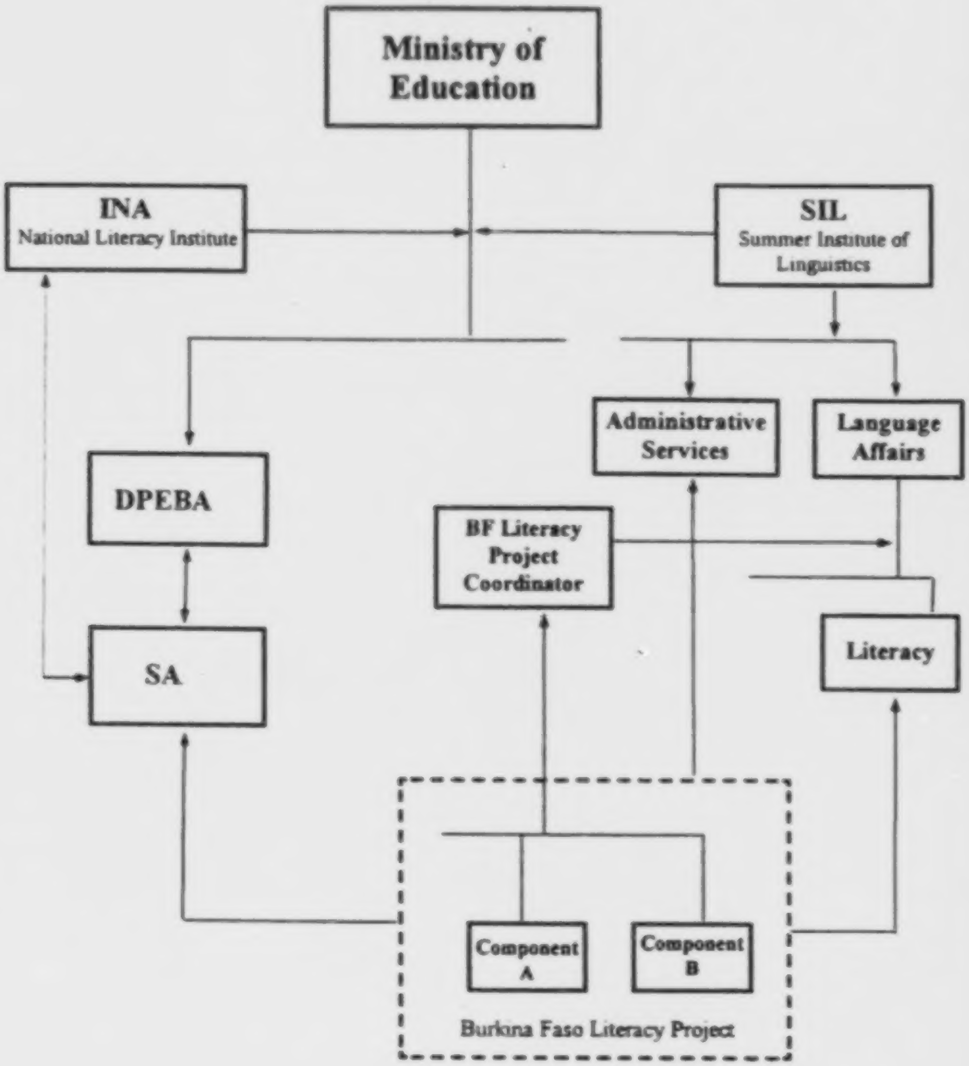
4. To comment on the impact of this program in terms of improved literacy rates, involvement of women (as learners, teachers, supervisors, and in other leadership roles), community development initiatives (if any), strengthening of organizational

capabilities and improved living conditions (illustrated with human-interest stories).

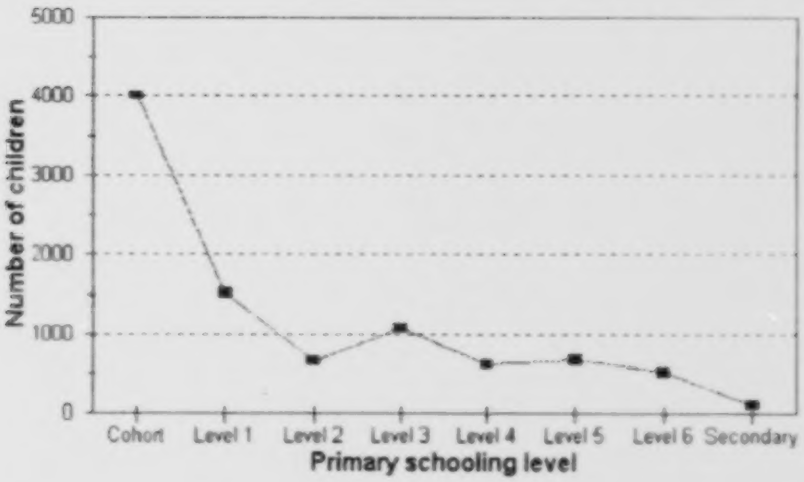
5. Lessons learned and recommendations.

Appendix 2

Organizational Chart of Agency Relationships


Ministry of Education
INA
National Literacy Institute
SIL
Summer Institute of Linguistics
DPEBA
SA
Administrative Services
Language Affairs
BF Literacy Project Coordinator
Literacy
Component A
Component B
Burkina Faso Literacy Project

Appendix 3



Schooling in rural Burkina Faso

The pattern of attrition

The above graph shows the pattern of school participation/leaving for one province in Burkina Faso. Data from various sources indicate that this pattern is quite normal for the country. The essential facts are these: (1) only about 35% of school-aged children begin school; (2) by level 4, half of those who began school have dropped out; (3) only about 1 out of 5 of those successfully completing primary school will enter the secondary schools.

In addition, it appears to be generally true that most students who do not finish at least four years of school revert back to illiteracy within 10 years. Therefore, the present school system institutionalizes adult literacy in the country at about 85%.

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List of agencies referenced in the report

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency. CIDA is the Canadian government agency which oversees and administers that country's foreign assistance. CIDA makes use of a variety of strategies for channeling this development assistance including Canadian non-governmental organizations.
DPEBA	*Direction Provinciale d'Enseignement de Base et d'Alphabétisation* (Provincial Office for Basic Education and Literacy). The DPEBA offices are the province-level offices responsible for all basic education. These offices report directly to the Ministry of Education and are the primary delivery apparatus for primary school education in the country.
INA	*Institut National d'Alphabétisation* (National Literacy Institute). INA is also a direct dependent of the Ministry of Education. The Institute is primarily a technical support agency. All actual programs at the provincial level are carried out by SA (see below) although the relationship is that of a dotted line rather than a reporting relationship.
SA	*Service d'Alphabétisation* (Literacy Service). SA is the primary delivery apparatus for literacy and basic adult education at the provincial level. At this level, SA works under the general oversight of DPEBA.
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics (*Société Internationale de Linguistique*). SIL is an international NGO specializing in language-related work around the world. Each national branch of SIL is independently chartered and administered, but works in cooperation with chartered branches in other countries.

Reviews

The acquisition of a second writing system. By Rosemary Sassoon. Oxford: Intellect, 1995. Pp. 154. Paperback £14.95.

Reviewed by Pete Unseth, Texas SIL

When I saw the title of the book, I assumed that it focused on literacy problems related to learning to read a second script. But the book focuses, instead, on the problems of **penmanship**, more than on **reading**. That is, Sassoon concentrates on the problems of learning to write a second script, not on learning to read a second script. This is not a conventional review in that I try to look at her book mainly from the point of view of the typical *Notes on Literacy* audience (concentrating on **reading**), rather than review for the broader audience that the author intended. Therefore, I do not address some of the main points of her book.

Her basic position on acquiring a second writing system is that we should analyze the rules of both the writing system that students know and the writing system that they are learning and compare them (p. 9), similar to Robert Lado's contrastive analysis principles.

Those of us who find ourselves involved in literacy programs that use scripts which we did not learn in our primary schooling can benefit from her insights on handwriting. We must be prepared to learn such things as new ways to hold a pen, hold new kinds of pens, new postures, and to write our strokes in different orders. Each script has its own traditions, its own aesthetic standards, and its own styles for different purposes. If we are going to have credibility, we need to be able to write in a way that is up to the national standard. On the other hand, we must also make sure that we are promoting and teaching an appropriate level of handwriting in initial literacy lessons, not too difficult and elevated a style, however prestigious.

Sassoon also gives a striking example of the need for culturally relevant pre-writing activities (pp. 68, 74, 75). An Australian aboriginal child refused to cooperate on a formal abstract test but produced sophisticated line drawings when illustrating a familiar story.

Sassoon reminds us that "literacy is a political issue" (p. 117) and that particular scripts are part of the "political infrastructure" (p. 119). This last issue is illustrated in the strong feelings for or against the use of Ethiopic script by minority languages in Ethiopia and attitudes toward use of Cyrillic script by other languages in the former USSR.

Additionally, Sassoon points out that fonts developed by people who are not steeped in the traditions of the particular script are likely to be less acceptable. Font designers from outside, she argues, will inevitably base their work on foreign design criteria (pp. 137–39). This is an important reminder in the current rush to develop new fonts for additional scripts.

In situations where literacy will include two scripts (presumably always for separate languages), she points out the advantages for the students learning one script well before learning a second. When teaching a student to read in a second script, it is not the same as teaching a person with no literacy skills. As Gudschinsky said, "You only learn to read once." When teaching a new script, the teacher must consider such factors as the learner's level of skill in the first writing system, whether the two writings systems are being learned simultaneously, and whether the second system is more "complex". By "complex", I presume she has in mind such features as total number of symbols, systematicity of sound symbol correspondence, and consistency of shape of the characters.

The book is lavishly illustrated with samples of handwriting and various fonts from around the world, showing her breadth of knowledge and how her principles attempt to be universal, not bound to Latin script. One disappointment was the large number of references in the text that are not found in the bibliography.

Ironically, as much as I was stimulated by this book, I am writing this review to prevent readers of NOL from seeing the title of the book and rushing off to buy it, thinking that it will greatly aid them as they struggles with the pedagogical issues related to acquiring literacy in a second script. The book is well written, but it does not primarily address those issues. Read the book to help with issues of teaching and learning writing skills in another script or developing fonts in another script.

Appropriate methodology and social context. By Adrian Holliday. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. 247. Hardback $42.95, Paperback $16.95.

Reviewed by Deborah A. Clifton, SIL North Eurasia Group

This book has value for many people: teachers and literacy personnel working across cultures; students in multicultural classes; curriculum developers; especially those working with foreign languages; educational administrators; field linguists training coworkers; in short, anyone moving across cultures who wants to explore the ways knowledge moves from one culture to another. Those working in anthropology or community development would find much between these covers to think about and discuss.

As one who has taught in various cultural situations, I agree with Holliday's statement: "The argument is that any methodology in English language education should be appropriate to the social context within which it is to be used. To achieve appropriacy, we must investigate, try to understand, and then address, whichever social context we are working within." (p.1) While Holliday specifically addresses those who are teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) courses around the world, the insights are of value to those teaching any subject across cultures.

What Holliday advocates is that teachers (and curriculum developers) must research the effect of the culture from which their students come, learn how this culture is influencing the classroom expectations of the students, and adapt their teaching style to take advantage of those factors which facilitate learning.

Holliday argues "the outcome [of studying the underlying factors influencing learning] is a reconstituting of elements which are indigenous to the cultures of the host educational environment—to produce something which is changed, but which also has its roots within the traditional" (p. 215). She gives many examples of cross-cultural situations in which such reconstituting produces increased learning and greater congruence in goals and activities for those involved in the educational process.

In the five chapters of Part A, Holliday investigates the relationship of the classroom culture to the larger culture of which it is a part. The adult moving into another culture, even if labeled a teacher upon arrival, must first become a student and study the new situation.

Then the four chapters of Part B address the difficulties a teacher who is trained to facilitate work groups which are "skills-based, discovery oriented and collaborative" (p. 96) may encounter when relating to students who expect professional academics to lecture knowledgeably on theoretical issues. Conflict may arise between teacher and student because students' expectations about protocol, hospitality, and informality in the classroom may differ from the teacher's. There may be conflicts between expatriate teachers and local personnel if the project being considered seems to threaten the status quo. The aid agency and the person who is beginning a project may have conflicts about how to report and whether to quantify results. In many ways, these conflicts result from deep beliefs and attitudes which are not often expressed by which the expatriate needs to know and understand.

Another issue (in chapter 8) is the possibility that the person moving into a foreign situation may have her own agenda, quite unrelated to that of the group to whom she is relating. Efficiency, diligence, and using quality materials may give the expatriate a sense of validity but not meet the needs of the host culture.

Part C addresses the concerns Holliday has raised by endorsing ethnographic action research. (ETHNOGRAPHIC = interpreting what people do as well as what they say; ACTION = the research is focused, with a purpose: changing the classroom culture.) The goal is not just to discover interesting, new fact. A key to success is "it should be [research which is able to] interpret events in and around the classroom. This involves being a non-prescriptive as possible, so as to allow meaning to emerge from the situation being studied. This interpretive approach is inherent in modern ethnography. Ethnographers try hard to interpret what they find, not to impose preconceptions and models from outside the situation" (p. 181).

The book closes with a challenge. While general principles and specific examples are given, this sort of research is going to be specific to each researcher. Thus there is an excitement of discovery and a challenge to apply what is observed. This in turn may lead to better relationships and improved communication across cultures.

Announcements

The North Dakota SIL Literacy Megacourse

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A full semester covered in nine weeks!

The Literacy Megacourse is comprised of the following three graduate courses accredited by the University of North Dakota.

• Principles of Literacy	3 semester hours
• Reading Theory and Applied Linguistics	3 semester hours
• Literacy Program Planning	3 semester hours

This course set assumes a background in basic linguistics, such as provided by the first course set of any SIL, but special tutoring sessions can be arranged for those without a linguistic background. It is a package of courses designed to prepare a person to be a literacy specialist. The cost is approximately $1,400 including room and board.

The Literacy Megacourse provides training in reading theory, the design of instructional literacy materials for minority language groups, principles of designing and testing a writing system, and an introduction to the full range of issues involved in designing and implementing a literacy program in the Two-Thirds World context.

Consider coming to North Dakota SIL in the United States for the Literacy Megacourse. Encourage your entity colleagues and associates from home to also participate. It's a great opportunity for teachers and educators to learn more about SIL while they pursue graduate level studies. The Dallas SIL admissions office (sil_admissions@sil.org / 972–708–7494) has enrollment forms and catalogs, or contact the Dallas International Literacy Office (steve_walter@sil.org / 972–708–7385) for detailed information.

The Literacy Megacourse is also offered every fall semester at SIL's Dallas campus in cooperation with the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). The fall 1997 semester begins 25 August and runs through 12 December. The cost (tuition, room, and board) is approximately $3,060 for UTA credit, and $2,060 for SIL credit.

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NOTES ON LITERACY

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Fitting in with Local Assumptions about Literacy: Some Ethiopian Experiences

Peter Unseth

Peter Unseth worked in Ethiopia from 1982–95. He taught linguistics and literacy at Addis Ababa University for six years. Then he and his wife, Carole, lead a literacy and Bible translation project among the Majangir people, working under the Mekane Yesus Church. He is currently teaching literacy at the International Linguistics Center in Dallas, Texas. He has his M.A. in Linguistics from the University of North Dakota.

1. Introduction to the topic

Outsiders working with local language literacy programs in other cultures or countries will often clash with local assumptions about literacy. The more these clashes can be reduced, the more the program fits in with local assumptions and expectations, and the more things are done in line with local ways, the greater the chances of the literacy program being accepted and the literacy program making an ongoing contribution in the society.

This article will discuss several ways in which our assumptions as outsiders may clash with local assumptions and expectations regarding literacy, some major, some minor. It will also suggest some ways to minimize the clashes. Undoubtedly, there are many more ways in which literacy programs can and do clash with local assumptions, but the article will try to focus on those that have the most to do with literacy itself and not broader cultural clashes.

People's assumptions and understandings about literacy are shaped by their earlier exposure to literacy. In most countries, literacy was first introduced in a language that was not the vernacular of the learners, e.g., Sanskrit or Latin, or in later centuries, Spanish, French, or English. In Ethiopia, literacy had been exclusively in Ethiopic (Ge'ez) and Arabic for centuries and was based almost exclusively in religious texts. People's assumptions about literacy and how it is acquired are often still influenced by these early patterns. This may have been long ago, before any of the current population was born, but such assumptions about literacy and how to acquire it may carry on for generations.

As we help promote literacy in additional languages, people will expect patterns of literacy instruction similar to what they have already seen. Within a country, there may be different patterns, also. For example, in Ethiopia, there are some variations in the way literacy has been taught in the Orthodox Church school, Muslim Koranic schools, government schools, and adult literacy campaigns (Ferguson 1971). For any given program, however, the focus should be on whatever stream of education is **locally** predominant (not necessarily **nationally** predominant), i.e., the one that has formed local people's assumptions about literacy and how it is acquired.

On the points where outsiders do not fit the assumed patterns, there will be clashes with local assumptions, probably with negative results. These clashes may be in the minds of members of the community at a variety of levels: the educational establishment, members of the vernacular community who are already (to varying degrees) literate in the language of wider communication (LWC), potential vernacular literacy teachers, parents of students, and the students themselves. To the extent that literacy personnel clash with the community's assumptions about how literacy should be taught, they risk weakening a literacy program.

It is the purpose here to raise questions, to stimulate thinking, more than to provide all the answers. The examples from Ethiopia and especially from the Majangir literacy project are given because the author knows the events first-hand and they illustrate the points well. They are not chosen because they exemplify ultimate solutions.

2. Literacy in a minority language

By working to introduce literacy in minority languages, we are automatically violating local assumptions about literacy (in almost all cases). That is, generally the assumption among both the educated and the uneducated is that literacy is only possible in a limited number of "developed" languages, languages with an established literary history. It is therefore assumed that minority languages cannot be written and read. For example, in Ethiopia, literacy was traditionally strictly in Ge'ez and Arabic (languages used only for religion, not for understanding). Not until the twentieth century was formal education initiated in Amharic, the language of government and the mother tongue of many (Shewaye and Taylor 1976:371). Though this was a step in the right direction, even students "who did not speak a word of Amharic were given literacy instruction in Amharic" (Demoz 1986:347). In other countries, the languages that have historically been utilized in education may also have histories that impact present assumptions about literacy. Faced with such assumptions about which languages can be used in literacy, the very task of minority language literacy may be a clash with local assumptions about literacy. This is one clash that cannot be avoided.

For many minority language speakers, this clash can represent good news, the opening up of whole new possibilities. For them, we are happy to clash with their previous assumptions about literacy in their languages. But for members of a broader national culture or the educated bilingual elite of a minority group (including people in positions of some authority and prestige, such as within government educational or ecclesiastical structures), vernacular literacy may be unsettling and resisted. Also, there are cases where speakers of minority languages do not want to learn to read in their vernaculars, but they would rather learn to read the LWC, assuming that there is no purpose in learning to read their vernaculars (Tilahun 1994:230, 231).

There are ways to at least reduce any unhappiness in such a clash. For example, in the Majangir literacy project Ethiopia, one point that needed to be repeatedly explained to members of the broader society was that the project was not trying to remove the Majangir people outside of the national culture. On the contrary, the desire was to give the Majangir people a better opportunity to learn the basics of reading in their own language first so that they could do better in the national school system. Over and over again, the literacy team repeated a quotation from a local school director about the difficulty of teaching Majangir students to speak the national language and to read at the same time, that it would be easier for the teachers and students if the students first learned reading in their own language.

Within the community of Christian believers, it was pointed out that a large goal of the literacy program was to give the Majangir people the Scriptures in the language that would best reach them. This was generally seen as a positive, if not sometimes second-best, solution. As a result, in part, of this reaction, the Majangir literacy office prominently displayed a collection of Scriptures in all the Ethiopian languages that could be procured (about fifteen languages). As people asked about these, it was pointed out to them that all of the Scriptures on that shelf were translations, even the Ethiopic version (Ge'ez) from over 1,500 years ago! In every case, Scripture had been translated into these various vernaculars because people had not understood the Scriptures in another language. Even the Amharic Bible, the language of national government and education, was produced only about 170 years ago because people could not understand the available Scriptures in Ge'ez. Sometimes it was also explained that the Bible had not been available in English for many years and that an early translator was burnt at the stake because of his commitment to giving people Scripture in the language they understood. As people realized that literacy and translation in "new" languages was a recurring event in history, they usually became more sympathetic toward what we were doing with vernacular literacy and translation.

3. Definitions of "read"

The very definition of the word "read" may be one point on which we as outsiders differ from the local assumptions. In a number of countries, to "read" is understood as meaning merely calling out the sounds of the written text. "Understand" is seen as separable from "read."

In Ethiopia, for example, the word translated as "read" in Amharic is *anεbbεbε*. Its definition[1] very clearly does not include "understanding." That is, to "read" means to call the sounds of the symbols correctly, regardless of whether one understands what the symbols represent. This is largely the result of centuries of religious education where the "reading" of sacred texts, almost the only form of literacy practiced, in both the Orthodox Church and in Islam was focused on the proper pronunciation of the texts. In both traditions, it was widely believed that the very language was sacred, so it did not matter so much if the reader did not understand the meaning of the text; it only mattered that the reader correctly pronounce the symbols. This does not mean that nobody could understand what they pronounced, but it does mean that understanding is seen as a later, separate, advanced step from learning to 'read.'

When speaking of being able to 'read' in the context of the Majangir literacy project, whether with teacher training sessions or in informal conversations, we often deliberately explained to people that the traditional concept of reading is not sufficient for us. We have demonstrated this by using a copy of Scripture in Ethiopic (Ge'ez), the old liturgical language, which is written with the same script as Amharic. A teacher trainee then "read" it aloud. The group then discussed whether any understood it. Of course, none had understood it. It was agreed that this was not a sufficient level of being able to *anεbbεbε*.

This was then contrasted with the Majangir literacy project, explaining that the project is promoting literacy in the language that the students know. Now, in the vernacular, it is possible for the Majangir literacy students to truly understand what they "read." This could be clearly demonstrated with written folk tales, but it was also pointed out that Christian believers would be able to understand the Scripture if they read that in their own language instead of the LWC.

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[1] Though it may now be redefined by educators, I found that even third year Linguistics majors at Addis Ababa University explicitly held to this traditional definition in interpreting the English word "read."

4. Different teaching methods

The matter of doing literacy in previously non-literate languages, rather than in the LWC, is a clash that we cannot avoid, only minimize. Other clashes with local assumptions will usually arise in teaching methods and materials. These are areas where clashes can be avoided by careful study of local patterns, especially their strengths, and then planning our methods and materials in line with these. We may find that our assumptions are less based on "modern" pedagogy than based on our cultural baggage. But even on points where we honestly feel the local pattern is pedagogically very poor, it is not wise to ignore it completely and work only in opposing patterns.

Clashes with local assumptions and patterns about teaching methods seem most likely to cause problems for vernacular teachers. Their preference is generally to teach in the same way that they were taught, following the only model they know: "teachers will tend to drill as they were drilled" (Waters 1992:26). Any changes will need to be presented to the teachers in ways that will convince them that the new ways are better than the traditional assumed pattern.

4.1 Strictly "bottom-up"

In Ethiopia, and indeed in many countries of the world, the early models of literacy teaching emphasized learning forms rather than meanings, focusing on individual letters and the sounds of the written words. This teaching method resulted from the fact that literacy was historically first taught in a language that the students did not know well (if at all). This "bottom-up" approach, which focuses on the smallest units and gradually works up, is in contrast to a "top-down" approach that would begin with texts and their meanings then gradually focus on smaller units, i.e., paragraphs, sentences, clauses, and words.

In the traditional Ethiopian Orthodox Church teaching pattern, students first learn a row of seven syllable symbols "by heart, so that in reality, he may not distinguish one letter from the other. As a next step to help him distinguish individual letters, he is led to pronounce each letter from left to right and then from top to bottom. This process is known as *k'ut'ır*, i.e., 'learning to count each letter'" (Dagne 1976:341). Then, after the student had memorized the entire syllabary chart, they would study the first several verses of the First Epistle St. John in the Ge'ez language. "The text is first read letter by letter ..., then in a singsong manner by pairs of letters ... Next the pupil reads aloud in a slow singsong way short phrases of two or three words .... Finally, he reads connectedly" (Ferguson 1971:238, 239).

If an outsider comes in with a top-down literacy primer and teaching methodology, e.g., a language experience approach, this will clash with assumptions about how literacy is properly taught. An obvious way to reduce the clash with local assumptions and expectations is to include some locally expected bottom-up teaching along with some top-down teaching into the reading program. This can be done in a number of ways, including the some form of the Multi-Strategy approach (Stringer 1992, Stringer and Faraclas 1987, Rempel 1993) or in a less structured way, as is locally appropriate.

4.2 Teaching from alphabet charts

In many places, reading typically begins with the symbols of the writing system. This may be in song form, as American preschoolers are taught to sing "ABC ..., " or in a chart on the wall as in Ethiopia. In many situations, only after the students are judged to know all (or a majority) of the symbols, are they then exposed to words. In this approach, students are drilled on learning all the letters first, rather than on using their knowledge of some letters to read actual words and texts early in their literacy classes.

In Ethiopia, the traditional syllabary consists of over 230 symbols. It is expected that it will take a student a year of rote learning to learn these. The method of teaching these in schools has been to simply point to the symbols on a wall chart and drill them with a chant.

In search of an alternative method, a literacy team in Ethiopia once asked the late Sarah Gudschinsky to help prepare a primer series for the Wolaytta language of Ethiopia. The primers were a type of bottom-up method designed to help the students learn the individual syllable symbols and put them together to make words. This was certainly closer to local expectations than using a top-down method. However, local assumptions about how the syllabary is properly learned were still so strong and so counter to the method that the materials were soon abandoned (Adams 1995).

In a different approach, literacy programs that teach symbols based on frequency counts (productivity counts), rather than the traditional canonical order, generally do not use an alphabet-based approach. In one successful church-based literacy program in Ethiopia, the supervisor refused to even prepare a chart of the symbols (a syllabary chart, rather than an alphabet chart). She explained and defended this saying, "We want them to learn to *read*, not to learn a chart of symbols. If we prepare a syllable chart, the teachers will teach the chart, instead of teaching reading."[2]

However, if having a chart is an important part of the local assumptions, then an alphabet (or syllabary) chart may be an important item in a classroom. It may not be drilled in the traditional way, but its presence in classrooms could be crucial in legitimizing the literacy program in the eyes of local leaders. The story is told of a local dignitary who visited a literacy classroom and was unhappy in finding no alphabet chart on the wall. The teacher quickly found one and hung it up. It was never formally used in the classroom but having it hanging there was enough to satisfy the local expectation.

As a workable compromise between local expectations of learning to read with the Ethiopian syllabary chart, one literacy program prepared primers that paralleled the chart method. In this series, the syllables were taught by rows, as in the traditional chart (albeit formatted in vertical columns rather than horizontal rows). For example, the first lesson teaches the syllables built on the consonant /b/, e.g. *be, bu, bi, ba* ... However, in contrast to the canonical order found in the traditional chart, the consonants were taught in an order based on other factors, such as frequency and simplicity of shape. In a further departure from the memorization of the chart, all symbols were taught within words and known symbols were used to build words, phrases, sentences, and short stories as soon as possible.

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[2] Roberta Hampton, describing her work in Ghana, says she adds lessons on the order of alphabet at the end of the primer series (p.c. 1996). By that point, the students know all the letters, they just need to learn alphabetical ordering; the alphabet chart is not used as a tool for teaching literacy, as such.

When the Majangir literacy team discussed what format to use in a primer, they were first presented with three different options ranging from the traditional chart to more content-based methods. It was not surprising that they chose the method just mentioned above. It was the one that was most similar to the chart method that they had all learned under, though they unanimously agreed that drilling the chart had been difficult and unpleasant in their student days.

5. Writing as separate from reading

Traditionally, reading in Ethiopia was seen to be a skill reserved for the elite. But the skill of writing was seen as a separate, even more difficult, skill. "In the traditional schooling the ability to write was not a necessary concomitant of the ability to read. Even accomplished scholars of the Church did not necessarily have facility in writing. Writing was the specialized skill of a class of artisans called the *qum tsahfi* (i.e. 'scribes')" (Demoz 1986:345). Demoz cites Kidane Wold, "a highly regarded Ethiopian scholar of the local tradition [who] bewails the separation of reading and writing." This separation resulted in scholars who did not know how to write, and scribes who did not understand what they copied, so that errors multiplied both in the manuscripts and in the interpretation of them (1986:345). But even with such a specialized skill, traditional scribes had a low status, because "it was widely believed that writing skill was integral to the practice of magic.

Anyone who could write was therefore always under the suspicion of dabbling in magic" (ibid.).

Much of this prejudice against writing has been lost in the last few decades as schools have been started all over the country. But in some areas, there is still the too frequent assumption that writing is a skill quite separate from reading.[3]

As an additional hindrance to writing skills, paper and notebooks have been expensive and hard to get for most Ethiopian students. Also, since classes generally function under time constraints, "reading" has been stressed almost exclusively in literacy programs, rather than spending time on "writing." In such a situation, any effort to introduce a significant "writing" component into literacy classes may be met with skepticism, if not opposition.

6. Amount of time needed to become literate

How long does it take to become literate? Obviously there is not easy answer; it depends upon so many variables, such as the intensity of the time spent in literacy training, the number of symbols used in the orthography, the inherent ability of the learner, and the quality of the materials and teacher.

Though there may be no definitive answer possible, there are still local assumptions on how long they will have to study literacy before they feel that they can read. In the traditional Orthodox Church system in Ethiopia, it is expected that it may take years for a student to be able to *dawit dɛgɛmɛ* 'repeat David,' that is, be able to pronounce the Psalms, a sort of graduation to a certain stage of literacy (Ferguson 1971:235, 239).

In contrast to this Ethiopian example, not everybody assumes that it should take so long. For example, among the Hewa people in Papua New Guinea, minimal exposure to traditional western education had kept them from developing strong assumptions about how people learn to read. As one result of this, the Hewa expected to be able to read translated Scripture very quickly. When their bottom-up literacy classes did not satisfy this assumption, many dropped out. When a different approach to literacy was tried, including using Scripture texts in the basic reader, people returned to reading classes with much more enthusiasm. In this case, the local assumptions about literacy were not based on any serious exposure to literacy, but their assumptions were strong, nonetheless (Vollrath 1991).

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[3] I have seen the results of this in that I have too often tried to read Amharic letters from people who can read the language fairly well. Their poor penmanship and spelling generally reflect lack of training and practice in writing, rather than inadequate command of the language.

A comparison of these two situations should remind us all that outsiders should not assume that they know what local assumptions are!

7. Motivations for literacy

Traditionally in Ethiopia, and in many other parts of the world, the primary motivation for literacy was to be able to participate more fully in one's religion. Then the twentieth century brought in a strong connection between literacy and employment. There was a time when anybody who finished school was assured of employment, usually under the government. The number of job openings, of course, has long since been surpassed by the huge number of school leavers seeking employment; but there is still a clear assumption in many peoples minds that the purpose for learning to read is to improve one's chances for a finding a job.

Other motivations for literacy have included such things as the desire to read for economic development or for personal status. Since Ethiopia's 1991 revolution and attendant change in policies and attitudes concerning ethnic identity, some people have been motivated to learn to read in their vernaculars out of ethnic pride. Even full length novels have been published in languages that were previously little used in written form.

A literacy program led by outsiders will inevitably have assumptions about motivation for literacy, but the outsiders may be moved by different motives than the local people. Even the local people will not all be moved by the same motives. It is important to examine the motivations (if any) moving the local community toward literacy. If the local assumptions are that literacy brings jobs, then they will be quickly frustrated if the literacy program cannot fulfill this hope. If the local assumption is that literacy brings improved health, then the local program should be prepared to present ways in which literacy actually can help people meet their health needs. If outside program supervisors assume a different set of motives than those that are operating locally, the literacy program will be less successful and more frustrating (to locals and outsiders) than if the local assumptions are met.

8. Literacy as strictly a government domain

We as outsiders may have a proper official relationship with appropriate government authorities and higher level approval of our efforts. However, the involvement of non-government people and institutions (e.g., churches) in initiating a literacy program may clash with local assumptions that literacy is a governmental responsibility and prerogative. To a (Western) mindset that values local initiative and often sees government involvement as a possible hindrance rather than a help, it is important to remember that local assumptions (especially in the minds of local educational authorities) may see a non-governmental literacy program as very strange idea, possibly even a threat. A literacy program without a solid infrastructure base (i.e., permanent office staff, a vehicle, field staff) may be seen as too temporary to merit interest or involvement. In such a situation, it may be important to organize a literacy program linked to a recognized, ongoing, local body, whether religious, ethnic, or social.

9. Conclusions and applications

This paper has listed and illustrated a number of ways in which vernacular literature programs and outside reading methods clash with local assumptions and expectations about literacy. It is not intended for this list to be exhaustive, but rather it raises topics and issues that may help literacy teams in other literacy programs. To understand local assumptions about literacy and education, outside literacy workers will need to spend quality time with local people. Some assumptions can be learned by asking; other assumptions will only come clear by observing over a period of time. Some steps have been mentioned which can and have been taken to reduce or solve problems that arise from violating local assumptions. But again, these are examples of possible solutions, not prescriptive, definitive, or universally applicable solutions.

Whatever the details of the local situation, the effectiveness of vernacular literacy programs can only be enhanced by reducing clashes with local assumptions and expectations. Sometimes this can be done by working to help change local assumptions; other times it must be done by modifying the program envisioned by outsiders.

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Gender in Primers

Fiona Varley

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The pressing need for women's literacy in today's world is beyond question and is a huge challenge for SIL. As most field workers are all too aware, literacy work is a complex phenomenon; it is about the representation and reproduction of symbols, either for subjugation or for empowerment. In view of these serious potential effects and implications, we must ask ourselves how sensitive we are in SIL to issues of gender in the design of our literacy programs. This article briefly considers one particular aspect: the design of primers.

A recent analysis by Ila Patel[1] of primers used in the government-sponsored Total Literacy Campaigns in Gujarat, India, highlights some ways in which gender issues may be neglected in the design and content of primers.

The study found that concern for women's equality was not adequately addressed or reflected in the text. Whilst some attempt was made to show positive images of women as protagonists (principle characters through whom the main message is conveyed in each lesson), their role was generally confined to caring and nurturing tasks in the family. Men were exclusively the protagonists for themes related to production-oriented development areas such as agriculture, income-generation, cooperation, environment, and self-employment. When women were portrayed in development roles, they were restricted to "women-centered" topics, e.g., health, hygiene, and girls' education (i.e., the traditional role of caring for the family).

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[1] Patel, Ila. 1996. Analysis of Total Literacy Campaign Primers. In Medel-Añonuevo, Carolyn (ed). Women Reading the World: Policies and Practices of Literacy in Asia. Hamburg: UNESCO.

Even on social issues, women protagonists only discussed topics related to marital and family life, such as dowry and alcoholism. Men, however, were not restricted to the production-oriented development sector; they informed and advised family members such items as marriage and dowry.

Analysis of interaction patterns of male and female protagonists revealed subtle gender differences. Men advised and informed mixed groups in the community, but women mostly addressed groups only of women in public.

Occasionally women were shown as engaged in economic activities, but their participation was presented as supplementary or secondary, e.g., picking vegetables and assisting in unloading manure from the cart, while men plowed and drove tractors.

Patel concludes that in general the primers reinforced existing gender stereotypes while superficially advocating equality. In fact, women's marginal productive role was further justified by the idealization of their domestic and reproductive role as wives and mothers. Women's roles and responsibilities were shown to revolve primarily around their role as caretakers in the family, while men held authority as decision-makers within the family but seldom actively participated in domestic work or childcare.

There is clearly a danger of paying lip service to the idea of integrating women into the development process, whilst in practice ignoring their role as productive workers and active citizens and instead focusing exclusively on the domestic and reproductive spheres.

Although primers will differ from one cultural context to another, Patel's analysis warns us against perpetuating stereotypes which disadvantage women. We must ensure that the content of our literacy programs matches and responds to the concerns of women and the need for an improvement in their status in the community without going too far and representing women in a way that bears not relation to the reality of their context.

Can There Be Writing Without Reading?

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1. Introduction

Is it true, as Frank Smith says, that "the writing that anyone does must be vastly complemented by reading if it is to achieve anything like the creative and communicative power that written language offers" (Smith 1983:558–67)? Does the language that has only recently been written offer the same power as those languages which have been written for eons and appear in copious quantities of written material? Do the aspiring authors in these areas have a hope to produce meaningful material? Can there, in fact, be writing without an abundance of nicely-produced books to demonstrate "proper" techniques, expose the reader to multiple genres, and inspire the potential author to write like a "real author?" While it may be preferable to have a wide variety of books accessible for readers in their own language, in most of the developing world, the books are just not available. This article will take the reader from where some of these cultures have come from, where they are now, and consider possibilities for ways in which local authors can be encouraged to develop an indigenous literature. This will be done through (1) analyzing the need and challenges that exist in light of the oral history of the minority groups, (2) outlining the local resources that are present and ways in which authors can benefit from these, (3) presenting ways in which unfamiliar genre can be introduced, and (4) examining potential strategies for training local authors in a culturally responsive way.

2. New challenges in oral societies

On a global scale we depend on writing, in its varied forms, to meet many of our needs. Yet, relatively speaking, the world's writing systems are somewhat new in comparison with the passing of information from one generation to another through the spoken word. There was a time in every culture when the preservation of the history of that group was entrusted to an oral historian. Before the more permanent written records became a possibility, these historians often made extensive use of various devices, such as the intricately knotted *quipu* used by the Incan Amauta, to maintain the purity and integrity of the history they passed on from generation to generation (Spaeth, 1995). These totally oral environments, according to Bhola (1994), are "long-gone," and we now "live in literate environments." It is true that most areas have come a long way from the need for *quipu*; however, many groups have only just learned how to represent the sounds of their language in writing. It is an arduous journey for first-generation literates to go from designing an orthography for their language to reflecting on their reality and representing it in writing and to then have the courage and conviction to share it with others (ibid.). However, the necessity for reading and writing has permeated virtually every hamlet, and neophyte literates are faced with the challenge to carry their society from the world of oral traditions into the world of writing.

2.1 Need for writing

For many generations, oral traditions were sufficient to meet the communication needs of many societies. Some may question why it is even necessary to introduce the written medium now. However, it is evident that non-literates are caught in a vicious circle: the illiterate are poor, the poor are powerless, and the powerless are illiterate, and on and on. Literacy is more than just learning to read and write; it is providing opportunities for people to protect themselves against exploitation (ibid.). But people do not just read, they must read something and that something must be in a language they understand.

2.2 Lack of written materials

For there to be success in reading there must be access to appropriate literature. However, many countries are in desperate need of even the most basic reading texts. In many schools in the developing world, the only books available for children to read are a minimal number of textbooks, often being shared by more than one student. The texts quite often present material in an artificial way to fulfill a particular instructional intent and use material that is irrelevant to the lives of young students (Oliveira, 1996). The school children may develop minimal skills, but these skills are not reinforced or maintained as they are thrust into a society virtually devoid of books.

The use of the term "book famine" describing the book situation in Africa correctly describes the scarcity of books in certain countries, but it does not convey the potential that exists in the development of local materials (Walter, 1996). In reaction to this deficiency of books, many countries have advocated relief rather than development. In Africa, some of these relief efforts in the form of "free books" for schools, subsidized production and importation of textbooks has, in fact, only served as a disincentive to local publishers. Normally, instead of relief, the recipients prefer to be given the tools to develop and promote a self-reliant indigenous book trade (ibid.). With interesting books written by native authors about events that are familiar to the readers, reading skills will improve and be maintained after the children leave school (even with minimal education). An added benefit can be a desire by the readers to use their writing skills to produce their own creations.The challenge is for educational development programs to include reading promotion efforts and the creation of systems, such as development of local authors and publishing services, as well as distribution systems, for both textbooks and supplementary reading materials (Read, 1996).

2.3 Feasibility of publication

While native-authored books are the ideal solution, Greaney (1996) asserts that in many developing countries it is simply not economically feasible to publish materials in the student's home language. This may be true for a professional publishing house which is concerned with the profitability of large runs, especially for textbooks which must meet instructional criteria. At the grass-roots village level, however, where a few supplemental reading books authored by local writers are produced on hand-operated presses with very minimal investment in personnel and equipment, it **is** feasible and attainable. In Papua New Guinea alone, with over 860 distinct languages in a little over 4 million population, it would be an indomitable feat to publish high quality vernacular materials for each school child, much less to encourage adult literacy. The answer lies in the production of local stories from the germination of the idea all the way through to the publishing and distribution. It is possible but not without difficulties and, perhaps, some concessions.

2.4 Vernacular materials

It is a foregone conclusion that in order to read there has to be something in writing. Preferably, this writing would be in the language that the reader understands best. In fact, UNESCO felt vernacular literacy was so important that they defined literacy as "the ability to read and write **in the mother tongue**" (Bhola 1994:10, 28). The effectiveness of initial instruction in the mother tongue has been supported by research which affirms that after two to three years of instruction in the first language, a learner can learn a second language quite effectively (Greaney op. cit.). The success of vernacular literacy cannot be disputed. However, the reality in many places is that interesting reading material in the first language to support this type of instruction, whether textbooks or supplementary reading materials, does not exist. Children should have access to books written in a familiar language which brings them in contact with their own culture, lifestyle, sports, and heroes. Local authors are best equipped to introduce young readers to these important sources of information and pleasure (Walter op. cit.).

2.5 Book floods

In the absence of locally produced supplementary material for children and adults, schools and governments have on occasion used international book donation schemes where certain groups have "flooded" various communities with scores of English books. While these books were chosen with care for "student interest, illustrations, local themes, sensitivity to cultural differences, predictability of language, print size, potential for new language acquisition, durability, and cost" (Elley 1996:151), the choices nevertheless were not made by the people who would be using them.

2.5.1 Benefits. There was evidence that the literacy levels in the participating schools were raised where students were learning in a language different from their home (ibid.) and that the donated books may have positive results for children who are ready for the transition from their mother tongue to the national language. It is also true that even if the books are printed in a foreign language, they are giving the school children exposure to books.

2.5.2 Disadvantages. If UNESCO's definition of literacy as the ability to read and write in the mother tongue is accurate, our efforts should be directed at producing materials in the indigenous language rather than inundating communities with foreign-language material. In addition to the language issue, Greaney (op. cit.) maintains that often the content of donated materials made many books unsuitable for use, especially for young readers or for non-specialists. As an example, he cites manuals for American cars, servicing an airplane, and instructions for completing a U. S. Tax form seen among donated books in Indonesia as well as other equally useless books in the Philippines. Cultural invisibility is another issue with donated books. Children and adults need books about themselves to affirm who they are in the world. If an area is inundated with foreign books with irrelevant illustrations and subject matter, the communication is basically that their society's culture does not exist (B. Moore, 1987).

Besides the inappropriateness of some of the donated books and the cultural invisibility issue, the professionally produced book becomes a model that is an unrealistic goal for local authors to pursue. A comparison of what can be produced at the village level with what is produced by highly skilled artists and writers through state-of-the-art technology can undermine the local motivation to even try. This loss can be exacerbated when the local people choose to look at (not "read") the nice colorful books sent to them from the more prestigious countries of the world. This was verified by a conversation Margaret Wendell had with an elder in a Ghanian village. When asked how the locally produced materials were accepted by the people, the elder replied that the people really liked them until they saw the fancy ones, then they lost interest in producing their own (Wendell, interview). While their books may not have been as aesthetically appealing, the cultural relevance could not be matched by the imported books.

Culturally relevant materials can be difficult to develop, however, especially in minority languages in which there is little previous experience of authorship or publishing (Read op. cit.). Writing as expression is a very new skill in developing areas, and if there is an expectation—either by the authors themselves or by the community—that the beginning-level writer can produce professional quality work, the frustration of trying to achieve that level can be devastating. The newly-written minority languages are a rich literary resource still buried for the most part but with the potential for lasting and ongoing literature. To suppress this resource and import the foreign western art, story form, and cultural identity is an insult to these groups who have managed to maintain the richness of their own heritage for multiple generations.

3. Community resources

The distinctive qualities of native-authored literature drawn from village resources is unique and can not be duplicated either by imported literature or by non-native authors writing about the culture. However, the value of some of the more common elements of the culture, such as idiomatic expressions, may not be recognized and fully utilized by emerging authors, yet these are the ingredients of that culture's uniqueness.

3.1 Language

Of all the resources available to a local author, perhaps the most unique is the exclusive ability each language group has to linguistically express thoughts and ideas that are important to the culture. Writing in the vernacular allows a level of communication not possible through a second or third language. Mother tongue literature speaks to the heart of adults and children and gives the opportunity for everyone speaking that language to understand and be exposed to books in a language he understands. In developing nations where the local languages are prominent (such as the Pacific Islands, where 80 to 90 percent of people still speak the indigenous language), it is vital that the extremely rich oral traditions be maintained and mother tongue literature be fostered to reflect this language use (Wendt, 1987).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan novelist and playwright, learned the value of writing plays in his mother tongue after he was jailed because his village-level folk theater, using the vernacular Kikuyu, was viewed by the government as being "too political." Although most of his plays and novels had been written in English, he started writing seriously in his mother tongue while in jail. Now he views an author's commitment to his people as being related to writing in the indigenous language (ibid.).

In the Pacific Island region, contemporary authors use the indigenous language for children's stories, but the lingua franca is generally used for novels, poems, short stories, and other genre for adults (Long, in press). This choice of language for different audiences may be related to some limitations within vernacular languages. Indigenous languages often do not have extensive vocabularies that make use of numerous synonyms or descriptive terms. Color, for example, can be limited to black, white, and red. "Awakening the senses" is a common practice in eliciting descriptive phrases in the western world, but often it is an unproductive exercise with many minority languages (Wendell 1982:134). It is not uncommon, though, for there to be numerous words describing things that **are** important in the culture. The trainer is challenged to tap into that resource rather than trying to fit "description" into a western mold. An example may be the types of equipment used for fishing at certain seasons in some areas. For the trainer to try to elicit a description of the season, when the mere mention of a certain type of fishing gear would bring instant recognition to the local person that it was windy season or the time of low tide, would be unnatural to both the writer and the reader.

3.2 Experiences

While the potential exists within the language to express ideas creatively in the written form, this is generally a new concept and one which may need considerable encouragement and development. In many developing countries, what writing that is done in school has often been purely functional. For the new writers to learn to express things as vividly in writing as they do in their speech may take some practice. Although not everyone has the ability to see the significance in things others see as ordinary, everyone has experiences. Most writing (such as narrative, fiction, poetry, drama, and songs) is based, at least partially, on personal experience. Even people without the innate ability to be observant can be sensitized to "read their world," to open the eyes of observation, and implant ideas about expression (Graves, 1989).

3.3 Oral traditions

In every culture in the world, there is a history of storytelling. Through stories children learn about their world, life, nature, and the beliefs and values of their people (B. Moore, op. cit.). There are still many societies extant in the developing world for whom the oral traditions are a vital part of the culture (Spaeth, op. cit.). It is from these oral traditions that the written traditions can emerge.

3.4 Storytellers

While there is value in exposing writers to the various written styles, genres, and authors as advocated in current educational trends, the village storyteller is a rich resource at the grass-roots level of many developing nations where there is minimal or no written literature. Their cultures have been kept alive through passing on traditions orally from generation to generation, and these members of the society already hold a respected position. They have internalized the features of a good story in their culture. They know the culture probably better than anyone. They know what captures and maintains interest. They are masters of the use of features such as dialogue and non-verbal communication. In essence, they are the experts.

While the storytellers are the experts, their expertise is in the oral form of storytelling. They are the repositories of many of the stories that will inspire the writers, but there are some pitfalls in putting these oral gems onto the flat, two-dimensional page. The aura, the "illusive essence" (Long, op. cit.) that holds an audience spellbound for long hours, is missing in the written form. When a story is reduced to writing, it is in fact "reduced." The smells, sounds, sights, gestures, audience participation, environment, and other elements of the scene are lost in the translation from the oral to the written form (Spaeth, op. cit.). But they need not be lost if potential authors can be sensitized to an awareness of these elements and given the tools to describe them in writing.

4. Local authorship

Writing is not easy, even for the experienced author. It should not come as a surprise, then, that there will be some difficulties in getting potential authors to take the first step or in getting the community to see the value of the activity. However, the benefits, both to the community and the authors, far outweigh the initial concerns.

4.1 Benefits

Barbara Bergin (as cited in Bhola 1994:88) lists some of the benefits to the new adult authors involved in two studies she had done with recent literates in Vermont and Kentucky (USA):

- increased sense of pride in self and self-esteem;
- a good sense of personal recognition;
- a sense of identification with other learners, seen and unseen;
- lessened feelings of personal inadequacy or isolation;
- greater motivation to read and write;
- increased communication among learners; and
- meaningful collaboration among learners and teachers.

While not all of these benefits are likely to be seen in all cultures, many of them are not culture-specific and are as likely to surface in the remote village in the developing nation as they are to appear in adult learners in the United States.

4.2 Some success stories

Efforts are being made throughout many developing nations to overcome obstacles and encourage new writers at the local level. Several of these use the workshop setting to bring potential authors together in a group.

4.2.1 Pacific Islands. Writers' workshops held at Tonga and Western Samoa have been the forum for developing vernacular authors in several Pacific Island areas. Don Long, a children's book editor in New Zealand, enthusiastically reports that, largely as a result of these workshops, high-quality children's books are now professionally produced in the vernacular at the rate of about a book a week. To achieve this level of high quality, culturally relevant artwork is produced in multiple colors on durable heavy-stock paper, and the local language translation of the text is printed separately in black ink. Cassette tapes are also produced for many of the stories, as well as teacher's guides. The books are published for the various departments of education in the different regions.

Retold traditional stories, superstitions, how-to's on traditional activities, autobiographical stories, and translations are used as resources for these books (Long, personal communication, 7 August 1996 and 31 October 1996).

4.2.2 Africa. Examples from Zimbabwe, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa support Scott Walter's statement that in order to get indigenous publishing houses going, there have to be writers writing, editors editing, and booksellers selling (Walter, op. cit.). Training in the various skills is necessary for this to be a successful venture. Walter advocates production of a maximum variety of titles and small print runs in order to give those involved in the process the opportunity to gain experience and learn from small mistakes yet give the variety necessary to grab and retain readers' attention (ibid.). Even though there is a strong contingent of publishers (including twenty-four indigenous firms) in the country, the majority of Zimbabweans still do not have access to the book trade, even in the urban townships. The Zimbabwe Book Marketing Scheme (ZBMS) determined that the primary reasons people did not buy books were related to access, a lack of awareness of the importance and value of books, a lack of knowledge of the types of books that were published and where they might be available, and, of course, the obvious economic constraints. ZBMS approached domestic marketing by: (1) identifying new distribution systems and markets through mail order service and establishing book clubs; (2) sending out a quarterly newsletter reporting on all aspects of book promotion; (3) administering an outreach traveling book sale with author readings and group discussions in both urban and rural areas with a "budding writers' competition"; and (4) publishing a database of all books in the region. According to the author (Walter, op cit.), the book clubs, the outreach program, and the database have all been quite successful in stimulating interest in reading and writing. The newsletter ceased publication due to financial constraints.

4.2.3 Papua New Guinea. In Papua New Guinea, writers' workshops have been an integral part of literacy training for a number of years. More recently, there has been increased attention given to training indigenous trainers who can then train authors at the local level. These trainers are given the opportunity to produce their own stories in order to gain experience for modeling the process in their training sessions. Primarily, personal experience and traditional stories are the focus with emphasis on stories that are "exciting, interesting, surprising, emotional, and funny." The editing process includes sharing their stories with their peers as a check for naturalness and comprehension and checking for errors in writing conventions. The trainees are also given pointers on layout and illustrating their stories from a professional artist, then they produce "big books" and/or small story books for use in the prep schools and early primary grades (prior to transitioning to the national language) (Jesudason, personal communication, 9/22/96).

4.2.4 Colombia. In writers' workshops conducted among the Guahibo people of Colombia, South America, numerous indigenous stories, poems, plays, and other genre have been produced, many of which have been used in bilingual school texts for primary and secondary students. Although beginning participants write stories that exist in their oral traditions, they are later introduced to different genre including poems (not necessarily rhyming), fiction, imaginary or fantasy tales, myths, fables, essays (informational), true stories (experience or history), plays, autobiography, advertising and promotion, riddles, proverbs, and songs. The participants are also given instruction on techniques for writing in their language, the elements of a story, critiquing, translation techniques, revision, and other skills (Kondo and Walter, 1989).

4.2.5 Shell books. The concept of using a mass-produced "shell" and inserting local language has been extensively used in Papua New Guinea and other countries as a means to increase the number of books available in the vernacular languages. The usual format is for professionally-drawn illustration pages to be preprinted or cut on stencils and the vernacular text inserted onto the picture pages. The actual publishing is then done at the village level using a silkscreen or mimeograph printer. Stories are quite often the products of the writers' workshops or translated material. (This "shell" concept is similar to what is described in section 4.2.1, the main difference being the level of production.)

While use of "shell books" has been successful in producing a variety of titles in a number of languages, Margaret Wendell (personal interview, 9/24/96) warns of the dangers of the community becoming reliant on this type of production to the exclusion of creating their own stories relating to their specific cultural identity. Although there are often similar features between neighboring cultures especially, caution should be exercised in using stories that are not relevant to the local community.

4.3 Need for local authors

Contemporary literature-based educational models advocate extensive exposure to a wide variety of authors, styles, and genres. School children are allowed to select the materials that appeal to their interest level. It is true that acquisition of vocabulary and comprehension skills are associated with broad reading of self-selected material (Greaney, op. cit.), but in realistic terms, access to such a wealth of literature is not available in many parts of the world. In fact, even textbooks are a rare commodity in most developing countries, despite their known impact on achievement. One book per student of any subject is the exception, not the rule (Oliveira, 1996). The lack of supplemental reading material in these countries, though, is far more prevalent. Apart from the general unavailability of funds and the high unit costs of books, other factors that contribute to the shortage of materials are lack of local booksellers, publishers, and writers of children's literature, and teacher discomfort with students reading material that is not on an examination or in the curriculum (Greaney, op. cit.).

4.4 Local models

Without the numerous examples of good stories that are so easily available at bookstores or libraries throughout the industrialized world, the developing nation must look elsewhere for its models. However, neophyte writers not having access to inspiring literary models may have difficulty with some features of writing a story, including getting the ideas. Inspiration is readily available, though, for the observant writer.

4.4.1 The story experts. The village storytellers can be a source not just to entertain the aspiring authors but to teach them as well. As writers progress in ability, they should study the techniques used by the storyteller to hold the audience spellbound. It is important that the language, paralanguage, and kinesic features, as well as smells, sights, sounds, and emotional tenor of the audience all be studied thoroughly and efforts made to effectively and accurately describe the scene in a story. As the apprentice authors apply these techniques to their own writing, the indigenous model will be the foundation for branching out into their own style, avoiding the adulteration of the cultural style by the western imports.

4.4.2 Customs. The storyteller is an excellent model for aspiring authors, but the observant writer can also draw from his own knowledge of the culture to present the material in a culturally appropriate style. Much teaching of traditional skills is done through observation and imitation in many countries, and it is such a natural part of growing up that the native author may need to be awakened to "reading her or his world" more closely in order to preserve some of the old traditions for the literate future generations. A good example of a written story that preserves the traditional "do it with me" style of teaching prevalent in the Cook Islands is "Fishing on the Lawn" by Aka'iti Tamarua Ama. It is the story of an eight year old girl who lived in the city and was having a visit with her grandmother in the "home village." The story evolves as grandmother takes her through the steps of catching *tupa*, an edible land crab, on the lawn. Because neighboring cultures are so similar to the Cook Islands, the story will be published in Samoan, Niuean, Tongan, and Tokelauan, as well as the original Cook Islands Maori (Long, personal correspondence, 7 August 1996).

An example of preserving the traditional culture in written form in an informational book is "*O Mamanu O le siapo,*" by Caroline Lolegi Vercoe (1996). The inspiration for the Samoan traditional designs on bark cloth is presented in the cultural way of passing on knowledge. The author demonstrates the progression of the design so the child reading the book can imitate what has been demonstrated (ibid.). This type of story may take a bit of research on the part of the author, since many traditional customs are being diluted by the influx of "modern" materials and techniques, but the people supplying the information, the author, and future generations will benefit from the effort it takes.

4.4.3 Communal stories or sayings as inspiration. A folktale, legend, myth, proverb, or even a superstition can be the basis for culturally relevant stories. These, too, can be so common and so ingrained in a child's growing-up process that the local writer may need to be made aware of this as a possible story source. An example of a superstition-turned-story is "*Te Tamaru 'e te Tupapaku,*" another story from the Cook Islands of a superstition about using an umbrella after dark (Scheel, 1995).

4.4.4 Songs as inspiration. Traditional songs may also be inspiration for stories or may in themselves relate a story. These and some of the other sources mentioned in this paper, however, may have certain cultural taboos that prevent them from being written or from being written by certain people. However, the author from within the culture would be aware of these restrictions and turn to other sources.

4.4.5 Personal experiences. As the writer becomes sensitized to observation skills and seeing significance in ordinary happenings, she or he will draw on this source for more and more story material. Besides the literal narrative of an actual event, however, experiences are often the inspiration for other types of writing. Since much fiction, especially, is related in some aspect to an actual experience, Don Long (see section 7.2) uses childhood experiences as a basis to start the authors in his workshops writing fiction (Long, personal correspondence, 31 October 1996).

4.5. Potential authors

In order to have writing, there must be writers. While some people may have innate abilities to see significance in everyday events, it is a challenge for the trainer to sensitize potential authors to develop observation skills, guide them into discovery processes, and give them the tools to write about them in an interesting and intelligent way. So, who are the best candidates at a grass-roots level to equip with these skills?

Margaret Wendell (1982:40) reports that the "best writings come from those trainees who know their own culture thoroughly, who have recently lived within its physical boundaries, and who love and respect their own society." It is true that many people in developing nations are moving from the rural areas into the cities where their distinct cultural identities become weakened by the diversity surrounding them. These differences will be reflected in their writings, and, if they have been away from the village for a very long time, what they write may be irrelevant to their intended readers. On the other hand, culture is not static, and the infiltration of different influences is becoming more common in almost every culture. These dynamics also need to be reflected in the vernacular materials.

The personal qualities that best describe a potential author are: persons who are thoughtful, creative, innovative, articulate, and willing to attempt something new while maintaining a deep appreciation and respect for their culture (ibid.). There is no difference in ability in gender, but cultural norms may influence the choices of who participates in the training or who writes certain kinds of stories. The decisions must be made at the community level. Don Long (op. cit.) reports that there are many more Pacific women than men currently publishing books, largely because of the proliferation of children's books by women authors. While not all topics in various cultures may be appropriate for either gender to write about, the indigenous group would be alert to these concerns.

4.6 Ownership

It is imperative that the community own every aspect of literature production. From the choice of the persons to be trained from within the culture, through to the writing process, editing, illustrating, publishing, and distributing, the product must belong to the community. Otherwise, they may not accept or respect what has been produced. There are instances where the community oversees the illustrations by a skilled artist and allows the professional printing of the book. This may be perfectly acceptable to the community, but it must be their decision that it be done that way by outsiders. It may be advantageous, however, to encourage the local people to take responsibility for the complete process, even if it means some compromises on fine illustrations and custom color layouts to maintain full control of the product.

Margaret Wendell (personal interview, 9/24/96) tells of a man whose writing skills were lacking, but who became an excellent editor. Someone else may be a good artist or have the organizational skills to oversee the publishing process. Another person may be a natural salesperson and be able to distribute the books to the various regions of the language group. The more local people involved, the more widespread the ownership and the more they will value the product of their efforts. The farther removed outsiders are from the process the more likely the final product will be a true reflection of the culture.

5. Story structure in different cultures

Different cultures view the idea of "story" in different ways. Those persons who are fortunate enough to have an opportunity to train emerging authors should be particularly sensitive to this issue. It is all too easy to impose our own schemata of "story structure" upon the emerging authors. This is especially important in children's literature, because the literature children read so strongly influences their concept, perhaps subconsciously, of **what** a story is (Long, op. cit.).

5.1 European-style structure

In a story grammar model developed by Thorndyke (as cited in Matsuyama, 1983:667), European-style stories include four main elements with each of those comprised of secondary elements: (1) setting = character, location and time; (2) theme = event(s) and goal; (3) plot = episode(s); and (4) resolution = event or state.

It is commonly recognized that there are variations of linguistic and musical structure among cultures; therefore, it should not be surprising to find that there are structural differences in stories, as well. There is a paucity of information available regarding differences in story structures of various cultures, which points to a need for additional research on this topic. Some differences will be examined here in order to make us sensitive to this issue as we interact with the different cultures.

5.2 Japanese structure

Whereas European-style stories usually portray a protagonist overcoming some kind of problem, many Japanese stories often show an honest and kind person who performs one or more benevolent acts receiving some reward for their action. However, the series of episodes within the story does not reveal a goal or desire on the part of the main character. The secondary character(s), though, do show a goal—of an undesirable nature. This difference in Japanese structure is rooted in deep cultural values, primarily influenced by Buddhism. The values underlying this structure show an emphasis on lack of desire, denying aggressiveness, and discouraging goal-oriented behavior (ibid.).

5.3 Various Pacific Island structures

In New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, efforts to identify traditional story structures among several indigenous languages have shown some interesting elements (Long, op. cit.).

5.3.1 Tongan. Tongan folktales, for example, are often stories that "move from misfortune to a happier outcome, or they might include the resolution of a problem through a magical act" (ibid.). Another distinctive feature is for the names of the characters to carry hidden meanings. For example, the name *Pungatoloaki* which occurs in a story consists of *punga*, a coral rock, and *toloaki*, which means to move forward. This name, then, is used as a clue to the plot of the story.

5.3.2 Tokelauan. The Tokelauan concept of a story also differs from our Western model. Typically, Tokelauan stories have a "beginning, a middle, and a moral and/or climax captured in a song-chant" (ibid.). The storyteller often breaks away from prose to sing this *tagi* (the song-chant). It is not uncommon at Tokelauan gatherings for snatches of the *tagi* to be heard in speeches. The speaker need only to chant a line or two, and the listeners can immediately recall the theme and outline of a mutually familiar story.

5.3.3 Samoan. The Samoan culture typically begins its stories by naming a married couple whose children are going to be the main characters in the story. To make this relevant to contemporary lifestyle, one Samoan author presents the traditional *fagogo* (Samoan folktale) from the perspective of a child who falls asleep listening to his grandmother tell the story and dreams he is the main character. The necessary characters were presented subtly within the story line, rather than at the beginning, but there were hints that the boy was not living in a traditional two-parent family. This fact would have made it difficult to begin the story in the traditional way. The author successfully maintained the essential elements, although they were presented in a different way (ibid.).

5.3.4 Niuean. While traditional structure is important for these cultures to maintain, local authors recognize the differences in the lifestyle of today's children. These structures have successfully been woven into stories with contemporary settings, enabling even children who are away from the "home culture" to identify with the stories. This was demonstrated in the story from the Niuean culture where strong elements of "how-to-do-it" are prevalent in the story structure in the *tupa* story previously mentioned (Long, op. cit.).

5.3.5 Fijian. In traditional Fijian stories, symbolism may be quite strong. For example, in one story of a girl with a long umbilical cord, the cord was symbolically connecting the readers to their place of origin. The storyteller's participation in the final episode of the story is also a formula used for bringing certain kinds of tales to an end (Manoa, 1987).

5.3.6 Indian. In Fiji, there is a rather large Indian immigrant population which has its own cultural expectations of "story." Dr. Vimlesh Kanti Verma (1987) states that Indian stories are not just a source of entertainment but are written with a specific objective. Most Indian stories either discuss human values considered important in character building or seek to help children adjust to society. Plots are from either heavenly, human, or animal "societies." The style often incorporates small verses or couplets throughout the story and frequent exaggerated statements, alliteration, and repetition. Children's stories, especially, always end happily, since it is felt that an unhappy ending is discouraging. In developing Hindi stories for Indian children in Fiji, a "literary" language, rather than a purely spoken language, must be used to avoid an extra linguistic burden for readers from a different cultural background who are not mother tongue readers. Local color is often added to make the stories more real and natural by adapting local proper names and occasionally using dialectal words or informal touches in dialogue (ibid.).

5.3.7 Colonial influences. It is only very recently, however, that much attention has been given to local structural elements. In the era preceding this, translations of Western tales such as "The Three Bears," "Little Riding Red Hood," "Robinson Crusoe," "Jack and the Beanstalk," "The Enormous Turnip," and other "classical" children's tales were considered good vernacular literature. In Samoa, these European stories even took on the Samoan story structure as they were told by the elders. At first glance, many of these translated stories in the vernacular may appear to be just that; but in many cases, they long ago "went in under the surface of the culture to resurface as the traditional Tuvaluan [tales]" (Long, op. cit.). Long also cites Albert Wendt's statement that "every night, [my] grandmother would reward us with *fagogo*. I didn't realise [sic], until I read Aesop's fables and Grimm's fairy tales in English, years later, that some of Grandmother's stories were from these collections, but she was telling them the *fagogo* way, in Samoan." This phenomenon is supported by Vilsoni Hereniko (1987) in Rotuman stories.

6. Levels of difficulty in different genre

Margaret Wendell (1982:25) draws on years of experience in many different cultures and the experiences of numerous coworkers to outline various stages of difficulty in reading material below.

Figure 1. Stages of difficulty in reading material

Easy to Difficult Reading Material Author: Member of local culture; speaker of local language Readers: Members of local culture; speakers of local language			
Stage	**Content in relation to:**		**Form of Presentation**
	Experience of Reader	**Experience of Author**	
1	Known	Direct, Personal	Free *
2	Unknown	Direct, Personal	Free *
3	Unknown	Vicarious	Free *
4	Unknown	Vicarious	Translated**

*Free presentation allows the author to present the material in any way he may deem appropriate.

**Translated presentation may prohibit or restrict any variations from the original style of presentation, such as clarifying statements.

Based on this information, the subject that is the easiest to produce and read is the personal experiential narrative familiar to the author and her or his audience. The subject that would be the most difficult is translated information on an unfamiliar subject. Moore (1989) and others agree that personal narratives are an easy starting place for beginning authors. The most demanding, according to Donald Graves (1994) and others, is fiction.

6.1 Narratives

Personal experience stories require the least effort of all the genre to write. The author can recall the incidents and relate them in story form. The skill comes in relating only what is necessary to the story and in focusing on one topic. It is all too easy when telling a story from experience to include all the superfluous details that actually happened, but these details may actually detract from the main idea. A technique that Donald Murray uses to help in focusing is to ask a question, such as, "What image sticks in my mind's eye and seems to symbolize the entire subject?" or "What is the one thing my reader needs to know most of all?" (Murray, 1985).

6.2 Fiction

Personal experience is an integral element in most writing, and Don Long uses this skillfully to ease emerging authors from the less difficult narrative to the more challenging fiction (described more fully in section 7.2) (Long, personal correspondence, 31 October 1996). For children, fictional stories arise quite naturally from their "pretend" or "make believe" play. When they reach the writing stage, they seem to have no trouble writing fiction, although their main focus is on the action with little thought to the primary role of characterization (Graves, 1994). Adults, however, are often inhibited in fictionalizing an incident. The use of drama in the prewriting stage may serve to break this block. The writing of fiction offers people one of the best opportunities to begin to understand other people, themselves, and the human condition through their creation of characters and struggling with the ambiguous problems of their characters' everyday lives (ibid.).

This opportunity, however, is not without its demands. Gardner says, "Every line of fiction is a promise of something that you will have to deal with later on in the work" (1985, cited in Graves 1994:290). It is understandable, then, that this unfamiliar and difficult genre is not commonly tackled in writers' workshops for the grass-roots author. In fact, Ms. Wendell (Wendell, interview) cautions the trainer about encouraging the writing of fiction too early stating that it is inappropriate for the beginning writer. She does, however, feel it could be a goal to work toward after the author has effectively mastered the retelling of myths and legends and personal experience stories.

An example of an early fictionalized personal experience story is "The Branch Minnow's Story." In this story, the Peruvian Amuesha author's perspective was changed from her own first person to that of a minnow who was caught in a bucket as water was dipped from the river. The story describes the minnow's feelings and things that it saw on its little trip away from the home waters (Duff, 1979).

6.3 Poetic forms

In many areas of the developing world, poetry may be a totally foreign idea, but in other areas, it is a traditional oral form. For the highland Mayan people of Guatemala, poetic devices have always been a key aspect of their oral communication, especially their ritual communication (Johnson, 1995). Nevertheless, Merieta Johnson learned in several workshops that it is difficult for many native Mayans who have been educated in Spanish to write Mayan poetry. She concluded that the innate poetic sense had been buried through years of disuse, resulting in the Spanish-dominant participants finding it difficult to resurrect the deep structures of their mother tongue. A few of the participants, however, "seemed to grasp the ideas almost as if they had been waiting just below the mind's surface for someone to provide a structure in which they could fit. The workshop freed them to use what they intuitively knew" (Johnson 1995:38). Ms. Johnson used role-playing prior to writing as a way to free the participants' thinking from customary patterns seen in Spanish books allowing the sub-conscious poetic forms to surface.

The primary focus of the workshop was on reviving traditional Mayan patterns of semantic couplets and parallelisms. The author asserts that there are deep poetic structures in the culture of each people (ibid.). The trainer's challenge is to create an environment which enables these culturally distinct forms to find expression.

So often when we think of poetry, we think of the notion of rhyme. Margaret Wendell (interview) and Kondo and Walter (1989) talk about poetry as an idea that originates in the mind or in the heart, and Graves (1994:327) adds that it is a way of "uncovering the ordinary world" as the world reveals itself to us and we "combine sound and sense in the discipline of the line." Free verse and rhythm through meter or through sound patterns may be more suitable to many languages than trying to conform to a rhyming structure.

6.3.1 Rhythm through poetry. The rhythm of poetry is especially helpful for children (or adults) learning to read. Robert and Marlene McCracken use poetry extensively in their educational strategies. They believe that "poetry is meant to be heard. Its rhythm and cadences and its rhyme, if any, make it a natural vehicle for introducing children to print" (McCracken 1986:102). The predictability of the poem's cadence makes it more easily remembered than prose. Of course, poetry is more than a teaching tool. Our feelings as readers are elicited by the sound and simplicity of poetry—the commonplace events made special in the hands of the poet.

As we have seen, though, while there is a simplicity in poetry, writing poetry is not a simple task, especially for the new writer. As with any genre, the author must be sensitized to observing the details of the life around him, finding significance in the ordinary and expressing it in poetic form.

6.3.2 Rhythm through songs or chants. Many people in cultures of developing nations seem to be intimately in touch with the naturally recurring rhythms within their surroundings. Rhythm has always been a part of their expression. Roberta Hampton, who lived in Ghana for eighteen years, reports on the traditional chanting and singing of some Ghanian stories. Other cultural uses of rhythm can be seen in talking drums, the songs, and dances (Hampton, interview with author, 28 October 1996).

Whereas poetry in isolation may not be in the cultural milieu, songs are a part of most cultures and are poetic expressions put to music. Traditional rhythms, as seen in songs, can inspire the writer to set poetry to music.

6.4 Drama

Dramatic presentations seem to be a natural expression in many developing nations. Papua New Guineans, for the most part, enjoy participating in this form of "play-acting." At the village level, however, the dramatization is usually very simple and loosely organized. While **writing** plays can be quite complex for the emerging author, requiring precise instructions and a high level of skill in writing dialogue, the informality and detachment of role-playing can be a useful tool in helping the beginning writer in the prewriting stage. The writing of drama, however, is not out of reach of the indigenous writer, as shown in the dramatic presentation of a Samoan legend in "*O le Fagogo ia Sina ma le Tuna*" (Alama, 1995).

6.5 Riddles

Reina Kondo and Leah Walter (1989) report on the enthusiasm of the Guahibo people of Colombia, South America to write riddles. Although riddles may not have a cultural precedent, since they are short and describe culturally familiar objects, they can be a good beginning exercise to get authors thinking about things around them and ways of describing them.

7. Type of training

Beyond knowing the sources for stories, potential authors will need something more than desire and motivation, although these are two essential elements. Only a few successful training models exist that can be used as guides for the training of indigenous authors. While there is considerable material available on the reading component of literacy in developing nations, much less attention is given to the writing aspect. Two very useful resources are "Bootstrap Literature: Preliterate Societies Do It Themselves" by Margaret M. Wendell (1982) and "A Manual for Indian Writers" by Reina Kondo and Leah Walter (1989). Whatever the method used, it is imperative that the trainer have the utmost sensitivity and respect for the language, the culture, and the people for whom the stories are written.

As discussed throughout this article, the training of the neoliterate in developing nations as vernacular authors can not easily follow contemporary methods used in the well-equipped schools of industrialized nations. However, despite the limitations, it is necessary that a body of vernacular literature be developed for these minority languages in order to acquire and maintain literacy skills. The question is how to adapt techniques from writing instruction in nations having easy access to numerous resources to fit with the resources of a different nature available to the grass-roots author. One such approach that has promise for its adaptability is the "writing workshop" approach (or writing process) as advocated by Donald Graves (1994), Lucy Calkins (1994), Nancie Atwell (1987), and others. The features of this instructional method will be examined and compared with known existing approaches in developing nations and examined for their potential applicability at the grass-roots level.

7.1 Outline of the writing workshop

According to Graves, Calkins, Atwell, and others (ibid.), the main features of the approach are (1) the prewriting period, (2) writing, (3) conferencing, (4) mini-lessons, (5) sharing, (6) revision, (7) editing, and (8) publishing. Additionally, these same authors outline certain optimum conditions that are conducive to good writing: (1) time (maximum, continuous exposure to the writing process), (2) choice (the author must be the "owner" of the piece, including choice of topic, style of writing, the "voice" to use, the perspective and all other elements), (3) exposure or demonstration (the writer needs to be exposed to good examples of writing, and the trainer/facilitator needs to model the process), and (4) response (feedback from peers, the trainer, and others in the community **throughout** the writing process).

While not all of the above elements of the approach are feasible in developing-nation situations, several can be applied quite effectively within the cultural context. In Papua New Guinea, for example, the outline of a trainer's training workshop included many of these elements, such things as brainstorming or prewriting, oral rehearsal, writing different genre, sharing, and editing (Jesudason, personal correspondence, 9/22/96). Many of these same features were seen in the workshops described in Kondo and Walter's manual (1989). Margaret Wendell has long been a champion for the author maintaining ownership of the piece (Wendell, 1982). We are only recently, however, becoming aware of differences in story structure and writing conventions within different cultures. It is difficult for trainers at the initial stages to remove themselves from their own ingrained perspective in these areas, but it is necessary for the indigenous author to be encouraged to discover the elements from within his own culture in order for a truly indigenous literature to result.

7.1.1 Prewriting. In the prewriting (also called incubation or rehearsal) stage of the writing process, discussion is the primary tool used to generate ideas. This discussion can be with peers, with people within the community, with the trainer, even with the author himself. It can take the form of brainstorming, mapping, or clustering, but it must take place before, during, and after the process (Browning and McClintic, 1995). During the prewriting discussions, everyone should have opportunity to share a story about anything that is important to him. One story often sparks another, and the trainer may have more difficulty limiting this activity than starting it. But eventually there comes a time of choosing, and the authors each must choose which **one** thing they want to write about.

Donald Murray (1985) outlines six ways writers collect information that produce ideas: (1) awareness, (2) observation, (3) recall, (4) empathy, (5) interviewing, and (6) library research. All but the sixth method are available for use by the indigenous writer. Research at the grass-roots level can instead take the form of interviewing or talking with the elders, parents, and grandparents who have the knowledge.

It is not unusual for Donald Murray (ibid.) to spend between 60 to 90 percent of his total writing time in collecting information and planning the writing of a piece. Although emergent authors will not have the resources available to them for research that Mr. Murray has, it should be expected that a large majority of time spent in writing will be done in the prewriting (and revising) stages.

The prewriting or planning stage is used to decide essential elements of the story. The author needs to keep in mind the persons for whom he will be writing (audience), the style to be used, genre, point of view, and the focus, i.e., the one main thing he is writing about.

Because oral skills are already highly valued in many cultures, it seems that discussion can be a natural avenue for discovering ideas—in a cultural context—to write about. While there is a type of rhetorical eloquence that is common in Papua New Guinea (and other places) which is useful in negotiating a bride price, land claim, or other issues, it is usually more a one-sided performance than a two-way discussion. However, interactive discussion does often take place among age-mates, with elders, and with other respected persons in the village. This type of skill also seems to be a common value in other parts of the developing world.

7.1.2 Writing. According to Graves (1994), drafting a piece is best done quickly without thought of special ways of expression, spelling, or other writing conventions. Refining in the form of revising and editing is done later.

In a rural setting in developing nations where writing is a relatively new skill, this type of free writing may be difficult. With years of experience in the mechanics of writing and the aid of word-processors, it is difficult for Westerners to identify with the problems of a vernacular author who may be writing his language for the first time. Margaret Wendell (interview) suggests that tape recorders be used to help the authors initially capture the flow of the story. It may even be possible that in transcribing their story, they can gain a better understanding of the reader's perspective to what they are saying. There are some practical problems associated with this type of recording, however, such as the availability of an appropriate number of machines, batteries, and tapes.

7.1.3 Conferencing. The conference should be used to help the authors "keep their thoughts moving, to solve minor problems, to hear their own voices, and to sense where they are going." The other work gets done through mini-lessons or authors helping authors (Routman, 1995:523). In the writing workshop, there is a great stress placed on the conference and listening to the emerging authors. Conferences may be initiated either by the author or by the trainer. In these conferences, the trainer individually confers with the author, encouraging, guiding, and helping the writer find a way through a problem. Sensitive questions may be asked to help the author stay on focus, clarify ambiguous points, discover new ways of saying something, or help him or her through a "block." The author may also seek the advice of a peer on a particular point, however, there is a danger that frequent peer conferences can replace the author's own introspection about his piece (Atwell, 1987). Peer responses from the group are discussed more fully in section 7.1.5.

Because of the inclination in many areas for village people to seek advice from elders and respected leaders, conferencing may seem the natural thing to do. However, the trainer may encounter some resistance if he has not first gained the trust and respect of the trainees (and community), or if, in the case of a woman trainer, the culture does not give recognition to women in roles such as this.

7.1.4 Mini-lessons. The "mini-lesson" is the forum for making a suggestion to the whole group of trainees, eg., raising a concern, exploring an issue, modeling a technique, or reinforcing a strategy in context (Calkins, op. cit.). Often the mini-lesson evolves from a problem that has been observed during conferencing. These very brief teaching sessions (about five minutes) are to help clarify issues (such as writing conventions) or to give special teaching emphasis to points that need attention.

While it may be necessary to address certain writing conventions in the mini-lesson, this should not be the primary focus of mini-lessons. Margaret Wendell (interview) feels that punctuation should not be introduced until the trainees see the need for it. The necessity for punctuation and capitalization especially can become evident when the writers become readers of their peers' work. When the various writing conventions are emphasized in the mini-lessons at a time when they are pertinent to the stage of writing being produced, the writers will more readily see the relevancy for the convention and apply it to their writing.

In many developing nations, the mode of teaching in the formal school system is one of drill and repetition. The adults who will most likely be the authors have gone through their schooling in this way. It has been their model. They may be looking for much more structure than what they are getting in the writing workshop setting. The extremely short mini-lessons may not seem like "real" instruction to the trainees, and they may not take them seriously. On the other hand, the brevity of the lessons may release them from the constraints of formal instruction and allow them to "take in" short bursts of information and apply it readily to what they are working on.

7.1.5 Sharing (peer response). The time of sharing with peers is a time to examine the use of language to describe experience, testing ways of rendering the experiences coherent, then reformulating the tentative coherences to reflect new perceptions of the experience (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1984). This is a time set aside for the authors to share with a larger group what they have written in order to get feedback, to get help from their peers on things needing attention in their writing, or to celebrate the completion of a piece. There can also be informal time when an author asks an individual peer for input (see section 7.1.3).

While it may be difficult for the recent literate to have the courage to share his work with others, this time of peer response is necessary for the writer. Each writer needs a reader, and peer review can assist the writer by supporting without giving undeserved praise, by making a suggestion without taking the piece away from the author, and by telling the writer what works best for them and what may need work (Murray, op. cit.).

7.1.6 Revision. Within the writing process, **writing** is usually taken to be the umbrella term, of which **revising** is one central component. Spandel and Stiggins (1990), however, state that it is more realistic for revision to be the umbrella term, of which writing is one component. They use revision in the sense of "revisioning" or "rethinking" one's ideas as the "heart" of the writing process. Putting the words on paper (the writing part) is a component of working and reworking the vision (ibid.).

For most writers, especially inexperienced writers or writers dealing with a new subject or working in a new genre, revision is particularly important. In fact, Donald Murray (op. cit.) is so emphatic about the revision process that he feels it should be repeated as many times as is necessary to produce a text worthy of editing. Murray does state, however, that a few pieces of writing are so well planned and rehearsed that they work the first time without revising. Nevertheless, most of the time revision allows the writer to re-see the text and discover in it what he did not expect to find (ibid.). The prewriting and the first draft were slight, bare, and rough. So revising and rewriting must be concerned with "injecting the substance and drama and polish that will catch and hold the readers' attention" (Walshe, 1981).

In the developing world where writing can be an intensive manual task, the authors may not be so anxious to revise their work. To the author, words on a page may seem permanent, unchangeable. But as the writers become accustomed to the improvement in meaning through rewriting, they will learn how temporary and malleable the written word can be. Revising may be made a little more palatable to the novice authors, however, by applying the art of cutting and pasting.

In his work with children, Donald Graves noted that children's opposition to revision was related to the imposed topic. When they were able to choose their own topics, revision became completely acceptable (ibid.). This difference in attitude demonstrates the importance of ownership. The topics, as well as the decisions about what things to change in revision, must be made by the owner of the piece.

7.1.7 Editing. While revision is the building up or elaboration of the rough draft, an attempt to capture the most dramatic elements of the first impressions and use them to grip a reader's attention (ibid.), editing is applying the mechanical conventions to hone the created piece into a publishable work.

The purpose of editing is to check for the errors in writing conventions that may be a barrier to the reader's understanding. Such things as punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing are only tools to help the reader interpret what the writer wants the reader to understand. Some errors may have been caught in the conference, the peer review, or the mini-lessons. After rewriting, the author should look closely for anything that could potentially prevent the exact meaning from getting through to the reader.

Because many writing conventions have not been standardized (e.g., spelling and punctuation) in newly written languages, editing can be quite a formidable task. However, in Colombia, South America there has been considerable emphasis on developing editors among the Guahibo people. In workshops to train this group, the Spanish model of punctuation, paragraphing, etc. was followed during the course. However, the specific phonological rules in the indigenous languages for certain features (such as the length of the pause and the lowering of the voice) were applied as a follow-up to the training (Kondo and Walter, 1990). The indigenous editor who graduates from these training sessions is expected to be more than a narrow specialist in copyreading and proofreading. Instead, these editors are learning skills that incorporate all areas of literature production: organization, writing, correction, illustration, design and layout, printing, distribution, evaluation, and more (Kondo, 1994).

7.1.8 Publishing. While publishing seems to be the penultimate goal of our efforts (use being the ultimate), there are times when publishing may not be wise. It is not a sin to abandon a piece of writing if the author does not feel "right" about the piece. An author who is not satisfied with his writing may be shamed if that piece is published for the community to see. Ownership of the material includes deciding when and/or if it is published. But, for those who do feel good about their piece, the ability to publish should be available (Bhola, op. cit.).

The moment of publication is important because it makes the author feel like an insider in the world of authorship. Publication does not mean the culmination of the writing process, rather it is the beginning of a "writerly life" (Calkins, op cit). The publishing Ms. Calkins is describing does not have to be elaborate. In fact, in the writing workshop approach used in the schools, publication is a very simple process. At the village level, the simplicity of the silkscreen or mimeograph machine is often the most practical means for making a large number of vernacular books available to village people to encourage reading, and ultimately, more writing. This process also involves more of the local people, acknowledging that the book is theirs. Margaret Wendell (interview) confirms that the more the local people are involved in the entire process, including publishing, the more they will own the product and the more they will see its value.

However, the workshops conducted in the Pacific Islands carry the written product through to professional illustration and printing with various vernacular texts added to the colored pages. In New Zealand this type of production can be accomplished for a reasonable cost and supplied in several key languages to the areas where these languages are spoken (Long, in press).

In many areas where there is a limited production of vernacular literature, however, the quality is often such that it cannot withstand the environmental conditions or the improper handling by people who do not realize the value of the book. Durability and book life are primary considerations for publishing, often made even more important because of the difficulties in many developing countries with availability and transport of the materials necessary to produce the books. Read (op. cit.) suggests that consideration might be given to publishing a limited number of books in a durable format, even though these may be less attractive than books such as the donated ones. While aesthetic appeal may be important, practicality is high on the priority list, as well.

7.2 Pacific Islands workshops

Much of the information presented in the previous writing workshop outline has been adapted from western models. However, New Zealand is in a strategic location to give assistance to several Pacific Islands nearby in encouraging indigenous authors. Don Long conducts workshops with these authors which follow many of the same techniques as the process approach, but incorporating as much of the local cultural perspective as possible (letter to author, 10/31/96). Several elements from the structure of these workshops are outlined below.

7.2.1 Local traditions. Before the workshop begins, the trainer carefully researches the oral storytelling traditions of the local cultures, as well as any existent published work of local writers. These stories and any articles about the storytelling traditions offer clues for relevancy and appropriate examples that can be used during the workshop.

7.2.2 Trainer's attitude. Respect for the language, culture, and abilities of the trainees is of utmost importance. From the outset, the trainer treats all the participants as fellow professional writers, getting them into the writing process immediately. Enthusiasm for writing is evident as the trainer models the process.

7.2.3 Ideas for writing. To get the "creative juices" going at a workshop, the trainer breaks the tasks down into manageable, compact tasks. Because the emphasis of these workshops is producing stories that can become the texts for illustrated books for children, the writers make lists of little incidents that happened to them (or their friends) during childhood. The trainer then models how one of these ideas can be built into a fiction by applying the incident to a fictional character living in today's world. This gives the writers the freedom to make things up, to bend the truth of what actually happened long ago into what the story seems to want to do now. The content of the workshops draws from different genre: new stories, retold traditional stories, autobiographical stories, and translations.

7.2.4 Structural aspects. Within a culture's storytelling tradition, there are elements that maintain the interest of the listeners. These elements are what Long calls "story starters, page turners, satisfying endings." During the rewriting stage, different techniques are applied to sharpen the draft, such as techniques for varying the conversational styles different characters use in dialogue that reveal something about their personality. Other techniques may include brainstorming on key words and phrases for a particular theme and then weaving some of these into the story.

7.2.5 Tips. The trainer shares some tips for the new writers, such as keeping a scrapbook of ideas and odd pieces of information for different sources that impress the writer as potentially useful for future stories. Other tips may be ways in which writers can continue writing regularly and ways to avoid the "block."

8. Roles

For there to be an ongoing production of indigenous literature, the various actors must be committed to the endeavor and fulfill the responsibilities of their roles. The key roles that shape the success or failure of this venture are the trainer, the trainee, and the community. Other ancillary roles are also important in supporting these primary ones.

8.1 Trainer

The trainer must himself be a writer. It is just as ludicrous to think that a nonwriter can teach writing as it is to think that a nonreader can teach reading. It is through personally experiencing the struggles and joys of writing that trainers (and potential trainers) learn the areas where guidance will be needed throughout the writing process, not simply commenting on the written product (Foster, 1992).

Encouraging the writer at all levels, especially in revision, should be viewed as a primary role of the trainer. This will help the writers to develop their ideas and to achieve greater clarity and honesty (ibid.). The trainer is only an authority in the sense of being a more fully matured writer and reader. He is a guide, a coach, a stimulator, a listener, and an informed responder (Knoblauch and Brannon, op. cit.).

8.2 Trainee

Trainee-authors must be committed to the task and willing to put forth the time necessary to continue to produce materials that will not only sustain literacy but encourage new writers. These authors will become the models, tutors, and trainers for the next generation of writers. The motivation for continued writing beyond the workshop setting is ideally from an internal desire, but in some areas strategies such as writers' competition may spur activity (Walter, op. cit.). However, in cultures where cooperative learning is the norm, competition may not be the vehicle to get writers writing.

8.3 Community

For an ongoing production of literature to be successful, the community must be supportive. This can take the form of an infrastructure that will oversee the literature through to publishing and distribution, or a library system, or book-sharing scheme. The schools should also be supportive, perhaps through giving opportunities for the local authors to share with the students and by making the books available for use by the students. Book fairs are also helpful in making the community aware of what is available in their language. To further encourage new writers, additional workshops can be organized at the local level, affording the now-experienced authors the opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences.

9. Assessment

Assessment is not just something that occurs at the completion of a written piece or at the closing of the workshop, it is as much an ongoing process as is the writing itself. Throughout the writing, both authors and trainers are engaged in an informal evaluation of what is happening in the writing process. This can be seen in the author's own revision of his work, comments made by peers or the trainer in conferencing or in peer review, and, subtly, even in the inflection of the reader's voice in reading the piece aloud. The criteria for assessment, though, needs to be more specific than "it just doesn't feel right."

In determining the assessment criteria for a writing workshop, the key elements that must be addressed are: (1) how to define "writing skill", and (2) the purpose for assessing. If the reason for assessing is to provide the trainees feedback *during* the writing process when they can most benefit from it, that purpose needs to be reflected in the assessment approach (Spandel and Stiggins, op cit). It is not enough for the trainer to determine the criteria for assessment; the writers must be involved, as well. Grass-roots authors, especially, need to learn to assess their own work since they may often be isolated from others who can give them feedback. To have their say in determining what to assess, the authors will experience full ownership of and full power over their words. The process must serve the student writers, and management of the process must, to the extent possible, be put in the hands of the writers. This is so, because writers do not all work the same way or at the same speed (ibid.).

Design of the assessment tool should begin by asking the writers what they think makes a good story good. This list may include things like being able to relate to it culturally, excitement or humor, or a lesson taught or learned. The trainer may add things like: ideas, support, the way the story flows (fluency), and consistency. The trainer needs to be careful, however, to avoid things that may not be appropriate in this context, such as a western story structure (unless that is the structure used in the traditional stories). Each of the listed elements should be discussed by trainer and writers and they should agree on the final criteria. The writers may then assess their work at any time during the writing process that seems best to them and use the criteria for commenting on their peers' work, as well. By placing the design and application of assessment in the hands of the authors, they are equipped to continue writing outside the workshop setting.

As far as evaluating the workshop itself, it should be up to the authors to determine if the goals of the workshop have been adequately met and to offer suggestions for further improvement.

10. Summary

The writing process, as used in industrialized nations, encompasses the entire school year and uses masses of literature to entice, excite, and enthuse potential writers. In the developing nations of the world, these resources do not exist in the language used by the people. Despite some weaknesses, the writing process approach does appear to hold promise (as adjusted to existing conditions in the culture) for encouraging emerging authors at the grass-roots level in developing a body of indigenous literature. However, there is no simple "recipe" for writing. What may work for one person (or one culture) may not work for another. The skill comes in using only what is useful in any given situation. The real purpose of training for these authors is to give them time, space, and freedom in which to write and to offer them a repertoire of skills from which they can pick and choose in teaching themselves to write (ibid.).

Although written history does not always record the first book written in a language, every language has had to start from there at some time. As the principles outlined in this paper are applied, each emergent author will help in writing their cultural group's history and proving that there can be writing without having an extensive body of literature to read.

Nevertheless, the task of developing a literate environment in the developing world is not an easy one. As Scott Walter states, "[It] is a process that spans generations. There is no quick or easy solution" (Walter 1996:146). If what Mr. Walter says is true, we cannot hope to see major changes in our lifetime; however, we can keep presenting opportunities and passing on knowledge and know that if just one person is responsive, that is one more than before.

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NOTES ON LITERACY

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A Serious Attempt to Setup a Community-owned Literacy Project

Karsten and Irene van Riezen with Robert and Margaret Hunt

Karsten and Irene van Riezen-Grunewald work in South Asia as a literacy and translation team. Karsten worked as a primary school teacher in the Netherlands and received his M.A. in Education from the University of Utrecht. His focus was on nonformal education, for which he did his research in South Asia. Irene has an M.A. in Semitic Languages and Linguistics from the Free University in Amsterdam. They did their SIL training in the United Kingdom in 1994-95.

Robert and Margaret Hunt are New Zealanders who began their work in the Philippines in April 1989. They have been working with the Matigsalug Manobo cultural community since 1990. Since April 1995, they have been involved in producing literacy materials and helping organize the literacy program. Before going to the Philippines, Robert worked as a software engineer, and Margaret trained in zoology. They trained in linguistics, translation, and literacy with SIL in New Zealand and Australia.

Introduction

There is much talk about "community-based" and "community-owned" projects. In practice you do not see much of this really happening. In this article, we describe our experiences during the past year. In that time we made a serious attempt to setup a literacy project that is owned by the people themselves.

What is the actual situation after this year? Although the SIL team still has input, the project is community owned to a large extent. The Matigsalug Literacy Education Incorporated is an officially recognized nongovernmental organization (NGO). Ten villages have a Village Education Committee that runs a class. There is a Filipino project coordinator, a secretary, and a bookkeeper. The staff moved from the house of the SIL team to a rented office. The first check from the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports is about to be released.

However, there are still many constraints and questions about the progress of the project. Will the communities really manage to run their own class? Can the project find capable Matigsalug supervisors to monitor the classes? Is the staff equipped enough to manage such a complex NGO? Will the board be able to handle the money by themselves in the future? We do not know yet.

Background

The Matigsalug language team, Robert and Margaret Hunt, were planning to start a literacy project in 1996. They could use some help. Karsten van Riezen was looking for a place to get some more experience in literacy before heading to South Asia. The two parts met together, and a year of internship was arranged.

In January 1996, the literacy person from the SIL team, Margaret Hunt, had already designed many of the literacy materials. Robert, her husband, had thus far worked on translation. He planned to set one year aside to setup the literacy work. Robert and Margaret had worked for six years in the area and knew the language and culture well. The other members of the team, Jeff and June McGriff, were on furlough at that time.

Karsten had visited a few literacy projects in Asia while working towards his M.A. in Education. He wanted a community-based literacy project but did not yet know how to work that out.

The setup of the project can be divided into nine steps. The different steps often overlap. Still the division into steps will make it easier to follow the different stages in the implementation of the project.

Figure 1. Matigsalug language project statistics

The Matigsalug Language Project	
Country:	Philippines
Area:	90,000 hectares in Central Mindanao
Size:	Approximately 20,000 Matigsalug speakers
Remoteness:	One main road crosses the area. Most villages can only be reached by hiking for several hours.
Way of living:	Subsistence farming, often slash and burn technique
Language:	Local: Matigsalug Regional: Cebuano National: Tagalog and English Most Matigsalugs also speak and understand Cebuano
Literacy rate:	Approximately 30%
Health indicator:	Up to 50% of the children die before their tenth birthday
Current language teams:	Robert and Margaret Hunt (Since 1990) June and Jeff McGriff (Since 1992)

Step 1: Getting to know the community

During the first months of 1996, many visits were made at various levels of the community. We met with local and regional government officials, local NGOs, pastors, mission organizations, and tribal leaders. During these visits, we made notes about the organizations and the people involved.

In the office we started to develop two databases. In one of them, we listed the people we had met or heard about. We filed their name, location, job, function, religion, language, and interest in literacy. In the other database, we sorted the different organizations that existed in the area. We listed governmental, nongovernmental, religious, and private organizations. From each organization we wrote down their purpose, activities, location, contact person, and relation to other organizations. We also made some write-ups about the leadership structure.

For the existing SIL team, it was interesting to discover that there were many more organizations in the area than they had known about.

Step 2: Mobilizing the people

During our visits and archiving, we looked for people with an interest in literacy. If we found a person with a potential interest, we would visit this person a few times more. We would talk about such topics as different aspects of literacy, experience in other areas, and spiritual interest.

From February onwards, we invited interested people for "literacy input meetings." There we discussed things like the teaching method, the organizational structure, the pilot area, and the start of a board. These meetings also gave us the opportunity to observe the participants. We wanted to know who could fill various roles, such as who could be a possible board member, who could be asked to do practical jobs, and who could possibly become a staff member.

During these meetings we were rarely in charge ourselves. We always asked one of the group to lead parts of the meeting. We would help them to plan the activity and to evaluate it afterwards. In this way we trained various individuals and learned their capacities. It was good to see some of them developing their skills, but others fell through. By trial and error we gradually got a group of potential helpers around us.

Mobilizing people is an ongoing process. We did not manage to find a potential coordinator until after September. Even now we always observe people. If we meet someone on the road we ask ourselves: "Who is this? It might be someone with potential."

Step 3: Setting up a structure

In March, we started to talk about a good organizational structure. We did not want SIL to be "the boss" of the project. We wanted the Matigsalug to own their own project.

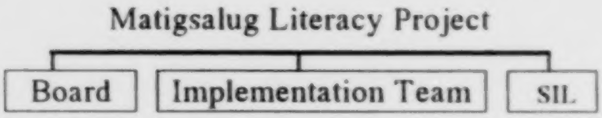
Our first idea was to work through the churches. We thought that the local pastors could become the teachers, the church circuit leaders could become the supervisors, and the church board could be a kind of literacy board. This idea did not work out. We never found a pastor excited about literacy. They all were too busy trying to survive while running their churches. We could not sense a vision for outreach through literacy.

We switched from the churches to the wider community. But how do you get the whole Matigsalug community to own the project? We decided to ask seven local agencies to select a representative for a board for the Matigsalug Literacy Project. As a result, we got a representative from the municipality, the *barangay*[1], the tribal organization, the Department of Education (DECS), the churches, and the NGOs. Beginning in April 1996, we started to meet with them on the first Saturday of each month.

Some of the people we had contact with did not fit in a board position, but they would be willing to do practical jobs for the project. These people we called the IMPLEMENTATION TEAM. This official status made it logical to invite them to every board meeting, too.

The organization structure was totally flat at that time. The board, the implementation team, and the SIL team were working as equal partners. Everybody had the same influence in the policy design. The organization structure looked as follows.

Figure 2. Initial organizational structure



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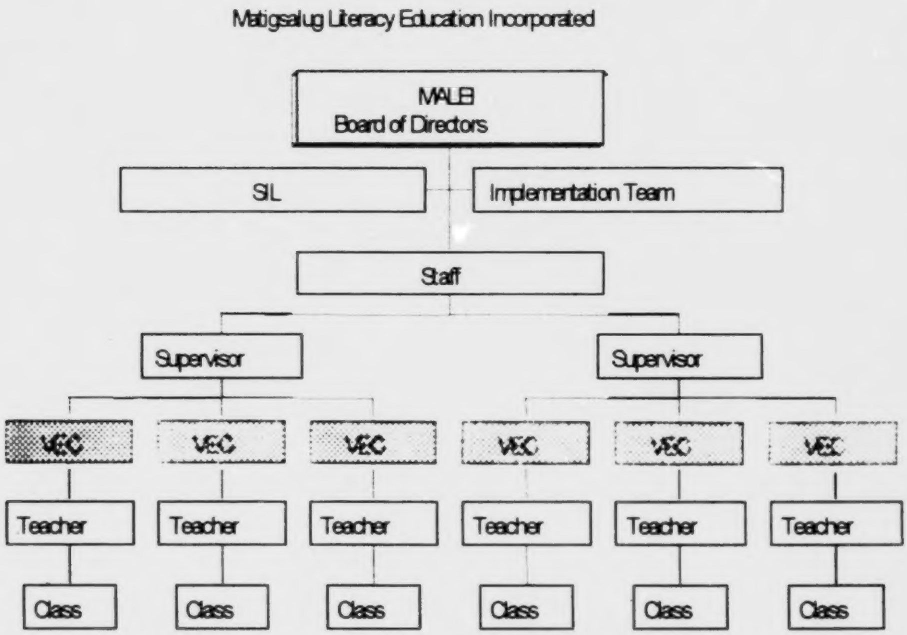
[1] The municipality is the regional government; the *barangay* is the local government.

At the first meetings, we discussed items that had to do with the philosophy of the project. In their August meeting, the board selected a chairman, vice chair, treasurer, and auditor. They asked Robert Hunt to become a board member. He was selected as the auditor. They selected a non-Matigsalug as the treasurer.

We also started to talk about the structure in the villages. We wanted the classes to be owned by the local communities. We raised the suggestion of starting VILLAGE EDUCATION COMMITTEES (VEC). These committees would be in charge of the class. They would be responsible for the classroom, the teacher, and the students. The organization structure we designed looked as follows.

Figure 3. Revised organization structure


Matigsalug Literacy Education Incorporated
MALEI
Board of Directors
SIL
Implementation Team
Staff
Supervisor
Supervisor
VEC
VEC
VEC
VEC
VEC
VEC
Teacher
Teacher
Teacher
Teacher
Teacher
Teacher
Class
Class
Class
Class
Class
Class

This structure turned out to be confusing. It has the board on top of the Village Education Committee. The coordinator and supervisor felt responsible for teacher allowances, class conflicts, and other class problems. This was meant to be the responsibility of the VEC. So in November we came up with another diagram. Although it has

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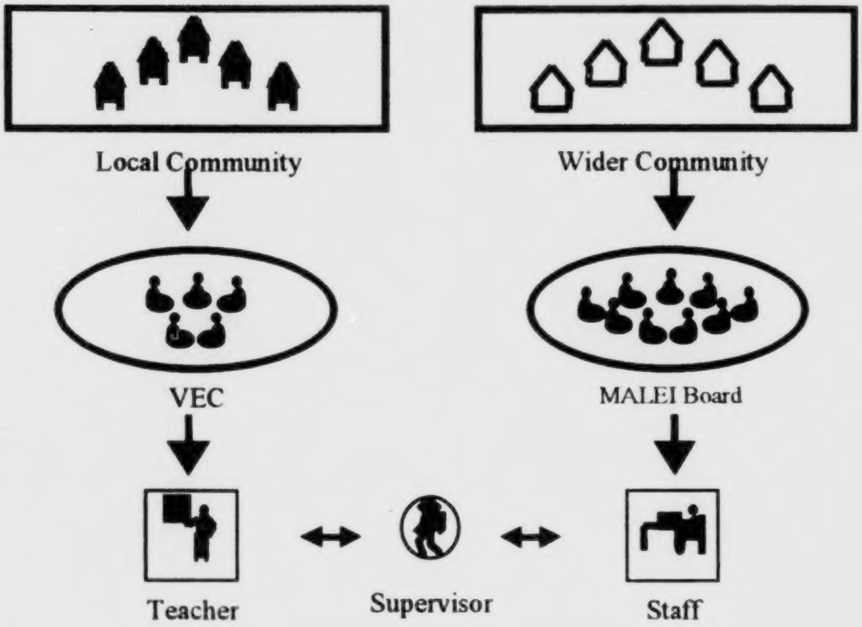
its limitations too, it still seems to work better. This diagram appears on the next page.

Figure 4. Final organizational structure



This diagram shows clearly that the Village Education Committees and the Matigsalug Literacy Education Incorporated (MALEI) board are on the same level. They both have their own responsibilities. As of April 1996, MALEI is only responsible for the technical support. For the second area in which we established the project, we decided to make these responsibilities formal by a contract. The contract is included in the appendix.

Step 4: Starting a pilot project

In March we conducted a survey of a possible pilot area. The survey was organized by some members of the implementation team. Robert and Karsten joined the survey but did not say anything during the village meetings. The team did a puppet show, led the discussion, and answered the questions. It was great to see that the team got the vision that this project was theirs.

During the survey we stated clearly that the project would only supply the materials, training, and monitoring. It would not pay allowances to the teachers. The village had to form a Village Education Committee, select a teacher, come to a two-week training course, and come up with a 150 peso deposit for the books. This idea of partnership was new in the Matigsalug area, so we expected only two or three villages to join the pilot project. To our surprise, during the follow-up survey, six villages told us that they wanted to join the project.

In September, we organized a teachers' training course. We had participants from all six villages. Margaret, as the designer of the method, was mainly responsible for the teacher training.

The last requirement, coming up with the 150 peso deposit, turned out to be a hard one. Nevertheless, at the beginning of October, only one week later than planned, all the six classes were running.

After a few weeks, we went on a supervision trip to observe the classes. During this trip, we trained the new supervisor. All the classes were running well. Still, we discovered quite a few weak areas that did not (yet?) work well. For example, some teachers had difficulties following the instruction sheet. Most VECs were not yet very organized, and some students rarely came to class because the VEC had enrolled them without informing them. These problems gave good suggestions for the follow-up training sessions for the VEC members and teachers.

The following supervision trips showed that the teaching improved. The students made good progress, still the average class attendance was lower than we had hoped for (about eight out of fifteen students). The VECs were still not functioning properly in half of the villages. In some villages, however, the VEC met regularly and managed to support the teacher by working on her fields, planting a garden for her, or giving her food.

The staff had been very clear about the fact that the project is not responsible for paying allowances, yet in many cases, the supervisor received requests to give allowances to the teachers.

Maybe because we were "Westerners," the people never really believed that we would not give some money in the end. To their surprise, this project really expected participation.

Step 5: Organizing and training the board

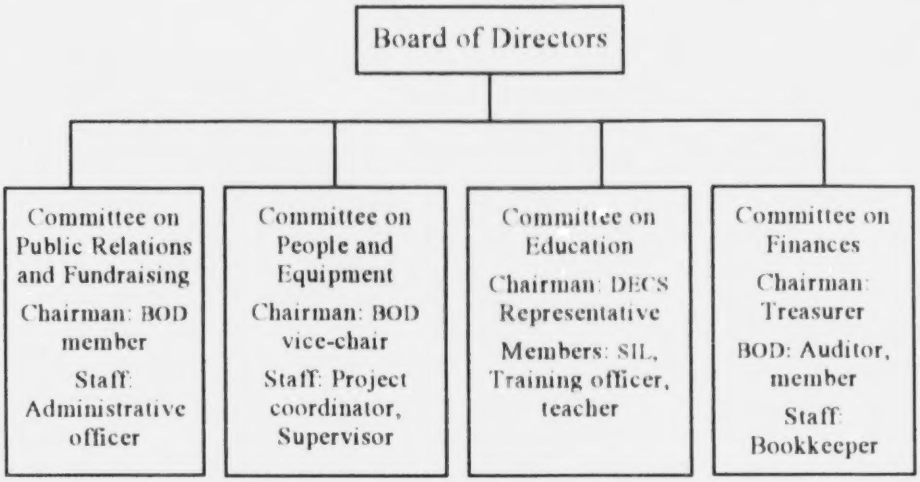
During the first board meetings in April, May, and June, we did vision-building activities. We discussed, for example, different statements about development, let them phrase a vision, and discussed cases in the area of financial management, task management, and personnel management. Options for management structures were discussed, and we had lectures about educational topics. We tried to get "all the noses in the same direction" (Dutch saying).

Sometimes the meetings were very encouraging, and we had the feeling that they had caught the vision. At other times, only half of the group turned up, and the discussion did not really take off. After the election of the different board positions in August, the meetings became more formal. The SIL team was no longer in charge of the meetings, although we still helped considerably in setting the agenda.

Every meeting started with a time of reporting. Implementation team members, and later the staff, reported about the progress and problems in the project. We had a formal time of training after that. That was nearly the only time an SIL team member was up front. We covered topics like bookkeeping, fundraising, community-based management, project philosophy, and networking.

We suggested making three committees in the board: Education, People and Equipment, and Finance and Fundraising. The last committee was later split in two. Each committee had a board member as chairman. Other committee members could be either board or team members. There were about four people in each committee. A diagram of how its organization looks is on the following page.

Figure 5. Board of Directors committees


Board of Directors
Committee on Public Relations and Fundraising
Chairman: BOD member
Staff: Administrative officer
Committee on People and Equipment
Chairman: BOD vice-chair
Staff: Project coordinator, Supervisor
Committee on Education
Chairman: DECS Representative
Members: SIL, Training officer, teacher
Committee on Finances
Chairman: Treasurer
BOD: Auditor, member
Staff: Bookkeeper

Board meetings were very time consuming for us. Board members needed to be visited many times to make sure that they would not forget the meeting. Then, there were the preparations for the meeting, i.e., setting the agenda and discussing it with the chairman. The SIL team's secretary, who later became the project secretary, had to type up the minutes in two languages.

During the year we saw a slow increase in concern and commitment. The board itself requested a retreat to catch the vision again and to become more connected with the project.

Already in September, the board expressed the need for becoming officially registered. This took several trips to the Regional Capital, Cagayan de Oro. The registration eventually got finalized in April 1997.

Step 6: Training the staff

During the start of the pilot project, we observed the performance of the implementation team members. In particular, the survey trip and training activities gave us an excellent possibility to look for their attitude, skills, and knowledge. For example, we gave a potential supervisor responsibilities in monitoring trainees. We asked a potential project coordinator to manage the logistics of the teacher training. We visited other people and asked their opinion about their qualities.

In September, we approached a potential supervisor and project coordinator. We also asked the SIL team's secretary if she would be interested in "changing boss" and transferring to the Matigsalug Literacy Education Incorporated. During the board meeting of October, we submitted those people to the board. The board assigned them all on a part-time basis. The project coordinator and supervisor have a few years of primary education and Bible school. The secretary is a Bible college graduate. Later on we assigned a bookkeeper, too.

From that time on, we tried as much as possible to discuss every problem with the new staff members. We asked them to do jobs like writing letters, leading meetings, and accompanying us on public relations visits. For these jobs we prepared them, let them do it, observed them, and evaluated it together afterwards.

We often had good discussions about the project philosophy and about practical things. We have had many good discussions about the fact that we do not pay allowances. The coordinator would often ask us difficult questions, like what to do if he meets a friend on the bus. Could he invite him for lunch and pay that with project money? To his agony our first reaction to this type of questions was always: "What do you think?" We tried to help him to form his own opinions. This was part of the training on the job. Later, we discovered that this sometimes could be difficult. Sometimes we did not agree with his opinion. In such cases, it is not easy to decide when to intervene and when to let go.

At the end of November, we started weekly staff meetings. This was a critical step in making the staff more independent from the SIL team. Until then, most of their activities where guided by us. The staff meetings were meant to help them to evaluate and plan their own activities.

We made an instruction sheet on how to prepare and lead a staff meeting. After several weeks of leading the meeting with our help, the project coordinator was able to be in charge of the meetings himself. Robert joined the staff meetings whenever he was available.

Every office day started with planning. The staff did their own day planning. After that we discussed these plans with them, and then they started their work. From January 1997, the staff was able to plan and carry out many of their activities. We made instruction sheets for different jobs.

Until January of 1997, the staff worked in the house of the SIL team. A major step for the staff was when they rented their own office. Halfway through February, they moved into a room elsewhere in the village. It certainly gave the staff more prestige, and now they had to make more decisions by themselves.

Step 7: Becoming financially independent

We were happy the board elected a very capable woman as treasurer. She is the director of another local NGO and knows much more about handling money than we do. She asked the SIL team to monitor the finances closely during the first stages of the project. Her experience is that handing over the money too quickly causes problems. For most of the board members, it is the first time that they have been responsible for such large amounts of money. Many projects in the area collapsed because of money issues. So, for the meantime, Robert is both auditor and cashier of the project. It is not a perfect combination, but it works.

The pilot project started before the fundraising was taking off. Fortunately, Karsten's mission board in the Netherlands wanted to help with funding the start of the project. We asked the project secretary to send them a letter with an official request for money **for the project** (not for SIL). The mission board accepted this and corresponded about the money primarily with the staff and not so much with the SIL members. Still the money was channeled through SIL.

In September, we invited a local cooperative to conduct a training seminar about bookkeeping. The board and staff learned how to fill in all kinds of forms and books. From then on, every transaction needed to be recorded and confirmed by signatures. Although this involved much work, it worked well. So far, no money has been lost.

This financial grant from the Netherlands was excellent for a start but was just a one-time contribution. For the project to be self-sustaining, funding needed to be raised from the community. Therefore, even before the start of the pilot project, we started to do public relations visits. Some of our activities included visits to the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports, the mayor, the Office of Southern Cultural Communities, and other agencies. We continued these visits every month. We invited officials to meetings and responded to invitations from them. These public relations contacts took a good deal of time, energy, and money. One problem was that it was impossible to make appointments without telephones. Also, several times our documents became lost, or our contact person was replaced.

Thus far we have not yet received any financial agreement, still we are encouraged by some contacts. The Department of Education, Culture, and Sports has a possibility for NGOs to be sponsored for literacy classes. We are also talking with other donors, for example, the Office of Southern Cultural Communities. For the costs that are not so popular for funding agencies, we approached the local government units. The province and municipality have shown interest in shouldering the staff wages. For the office furniture, we have sent a proposal to the New Zealand Embassy (the Hunts are from New Zealand). A problem is that each donor has its own agenda. We do not want to alter our approach for each different donor.

Actually the networking resulted in more than financial contacts; the contact with the Provincial Planning and Development Office worked out especially well. This department organized a health seminar for our teachers and sent a medical team around our villages. As a result of this, they plan other development work in the area. They are also looking for funds to support the literacy project.

Step 8: Expanding the project

In December 1996, we conducted a survey of a possible new project area. The coordinator, a potential new supervisor, a board member, and Robert visited several villages to present the project. All villages said they were eager to join the project despite the counterpart contribution we expected from them.

The implementation of this second area was quite hard. We had hoped it would go more smoothly, because we were more experienced. Actually, the opposite happened. We had quite a few problems getting the classes started. Although our goal was to have teachers for six villages, we only got four. These teachers were older and less educated than in the first area (averaging about two years primary school instead of four or five). Most interesting was that some of them were not Matigsalug, so they did a terrible job in spelling and creative writing! Another problem is that even now, some of the Village Education Committees have not come to pick up the class materials. We do not know if they have problems coming up with the 150 pesos deposit, if the travel distance causes the problem, or if motivation is lacking.

The implementation of the project in new areas has been revised several times. A copy of the area approach plan is included in the appendix.

Step 9: Handing over the responsibilities

Handing over responsibilities started the moment we initiated the project. It was an built in feature of the implementation. Still, we were doing plenty of preparation for meetings and thinking through the policy.

During the last three months of his internship, Karsten wrote down as many things as possible and discussed these with the coordinator. It was hard to keep a balance between producing a volume of papers small enough that they would be utilized and yet passing on ample, essential information.

We were very happy that the board asked for a retreat on the project philosophy in March 1997. This retreat gave the handing over of the responsibility a more visual point. Board, staff, and volunteers realized that now they had to carry on without an on-site literacy consultant, such as Karsten. Robert promised to assist the staff for two days a week. The board expressed the need for another consultant.

Evaluation

It is still too early to determine which aspects of the project are successful or and which are not. This requires more time, which is our main criticism. Taking one year to set up such a project is insufficient; the setup should have taken at least two years. On the other hand, the fact that Karsten could say, "I am here for just one year" helped the process of taking over. The staff and board realized that time was limited, so they needed to take their tasks seriously.

We are quite happy about the community ownership of the project. We still doubt if we can justify that we have established a secular board in a quite Christian area. On the other hand, we have tried as hard as possible. The advantage of the system now is that the project is much more embedded in the Matigsalug society. We prevented jealousy from other agencies, because they have been included. Having, for example, a representative from the DECS and the municipality in the board works excellently for networking.

Another point of criticism is that the setup of the project is very western. The implementation is done according to western theories. The whole organizational structure with a board, committees, supervisors, and staff is typically western, too. Why not use the indigenous management system? We would have liked that, but we could not see how it would work. The indigenous systems do not reach farther than a few villages. To reach 20,000 people, we needed a wider structure. By giving responsibility to the villages, we hope that at least on the local community level the traditional leadership structure will work. In most VECs, the communities selected a number of *datus* (traditional leaders). Still we would like to make it more "cultural."

One thing we have to work on in this project is the communities. We have underestimated how difficult it is for a community to get organized. A major task for the supervisors will be to strengthen the communities in such a way that they feel confident to run their own literacy class.

The future years will show if the people are happy to own their literacy project. The challenge for the SIL team will be to decide how much to steer and how much to "let it go."

Appendix

1. Contract example

MALEI-VEC Contract with ____________

Village Education Committee (VEC)	Matigsalug Literacy Education Incorporated (MALEI)
Building We organize a building where the class can meet. We keep the building in a good condition.	**Blackboard and chalk** We supply the class with a blackboard, chalk, and eraser.
Schedule We decide when the class will meet.	**Books** We supply the class with reading books, a primer, a maths method, and Bible story books.
Maintenance We make sure that the books and other materials stay in good condition. We organize the collection of P150 and pay it as a deposit for the materials.	**Boxes** We supply boxes to keep the materials in. If the materials are returned in a good condition, we will return the P150 deposit after the course.
Teacher We select a teacher. We organize the support of the teacher.	**Training** We provide a ten-day teacher training course with regular follow-up seminars. We provide regular training days for the VEC members.
Students We select the students. We make sure that they are motivated. We follow-up on students that do not attend the class.	**Coordination** Our staff in the office is planning the project. They ask permission from DECS and other officials. We pass on information about your *sitio* to other agencies for follow-up activities.
Committee (VEC) We meet regularly as a committee to discuss the class problems and the progress of the students.	**Monitoring** The supervisor will visit the *sitio* every month. He will listen and give encouragement and advice to the VEC, teacher, and students.
Supervisor We organize the food and lodging of the supervisor when he visits. We meet with him during his visit.	**Supervisor** We give the supervisor training and technical support. We give the supervisor a small allowance.
Date: MALEI Chairman: MALEI DECS representative: Project coordinator:	Date: VEC-Chairman: Tribal leader: *Sitio* Leader:
Area Supervisor:	

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2. Matigsalug Literacy Project Area Approach Plan

	First Area	**Second area**	**Activity**	**Content**
1.	Sept.	Mar.	Discuss with board	The staff presents different possibilities for next areas to the board. The board decides about the next area.
2.	Oct.	Apr.	Contact officials	Ask permission and inform DECS, FEMMATRICs and Barangay.
3.	Nov.	May	Contact *sitios*	Inform *datus* and *sitio* about the survey.
4.	Dec.	June	Survey trip	Discuss about literacy, explain the program, and invite to training.
5.	Jan.	July	Assigning of supervisor	The staff recommends a supervisor for the new area. The board appoints a new supervisor.
6.	Jan.	July	VEC Seminar 1	Discuss the education and literacy situation in their *sitio*. Present the program. Explain the application procedure. Lecture about community-based management.
7.	Jan.	July	Supervisors' training	Supervisor gets training in how to involve the community and about the project approach.
8.	Jan.	July	Supervision trip	The supervisor visits the communities and helps them to become organized in selecting a teacher, the enrollment of students, and making an "Action Plan."
9.	Feb.	Aug.	VEC/teachers' seminar	Official application, signing of contracts. Teaching skills about how to get the community involved in supporting the students and teacher.
10.	Feb.	Aug.	Teacher training	Teachers learn how to teach the method (See training manual).
11.	Mar.	Sept.	Start of classes	(See teachers guide.)
12.	Mar. - Aug.	Sept. - Feb.	Supervisor visits the *sitios*	Supervisor talks with VECs, teachers, and students and observes a class.
13.	Mar.- Aug.	Sept. - Feb.	Teachers' seminar (one day)	Teachers share their experience. Problems are discussed. Encouraging and improvement are the keywords. Guest speaker on development topic.
14.	Mar., May	Sept., Nov.	VEC seminar	VECs share their experience. Problems are discussed. Community strengthening activities are taught
15.	July	Jan.	VEC seminar	The VEC decides whether or not to apply for a further class.
16.	About Aug.	About Feb.	Graduation	Celebration, reading and writing performance, inspirational talk.
17.	Sept.	Mar.	Post-literacy activities	Matigsalug newspaper? Development activities? (networking)

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Education and Development: Is the Relationship Always Positive?

Anne Klaassens

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Education has long been considered a major contributor to development in a society, development that has typically been seen in economic terms. This has led to the common belief that, in order for a country's economy to grow, investment needs to be made into the educational sector. In the last decade, however, there has been a broadening of the definition of development to include other sectors besides the economic. A more global definition also takes into account social, cultural, and political ramifications which acknowledge that there are positive and negative aspects to the development process.

Research and experience have shown that the relationship between education and development is not simplistic, rather, it is multidimensional with many conflicting and contradictory facets. The purpose of this article is to discuss how education can both **contribute to** and **hinder** development in the following areas:

a) creation of citizens, national identity, and unity,
b) political participation,
c) promotion of societal values,
d) economic sphere, and
e) social structure.

Creation of citizens, national identity, and unity

One of the most commonly expressed functions of education is to create citizens. This is especially the case when a country either makes a break from colonialism or is pluralistic, trying to build links between people of many localized identities, ethnicities, and languages. A national educational system, by its use of the national language, national symbols, and standardized curriculum, can build patriotism in order to "break down local or regional identities and loyalties, and replace them with national identities and loyalties" (Fagerlind and Saha 1989:132). This formation of national identity can also help newly independent states to make a break with colonialism (ibid., 261).

On the other hand, there is reason to doubt whether this concept of national unity is ever more than a façade. Bock calls this the "myth of shared membership in a common national culture" (1982:93). Underneath this façade of patriotism, education may unintentionally promote the very things that can break down national unity, such as individualism, calls for justice, equality, and self-determination (Boli and Ramirez 1992). For instance, many factors brought about the social transformation of East Germany in 1989 (*die Wende*), but an important factor was the desire of many citizens to break down what they felt was the meaningless façade of the "new socialist person," an image that the national education system tried to promote.

In an effort to create national unity among different ethnic groups, adverse consequences may arise which hinder development. One consequence may be that members of ethnic minority groups must give up part of their own identity in order to gain access to education which is conducted in a national language and framed in nationalistic terms. This is the case in many developing countries, where children from ethnic minority groups must attend schools that deny the role of their home cultures.

Political participation

One application of the "national unity and identity" theme addressed above is that of political participation. Those who are validated as citizens through education are expected to participate in the political process in socially defined ways. Education provides people with the necessary tools and political awareness to meet the roles and expectations that are a part of citizenship. "Schooling serves as an extended initiation rite that symbolically transforms unformed children into enhanced individuals authorized to participate in the modern economy, polity and society" (Boli and Ramirez 1992:30; also Bock 1982:89, and Fagerlind and Saha 1989:141). During the Sandinista era in Nicaragua, education was used to mobilize the population to fight illiteracy and to promote the goals of the revolution (Arnove 1995:28–53).

In some situations, however, education's attempts to foster political participation may result in opposite effects. Whereas socialist governments promise self-rule by citizens through "the dictatorship of the proletariat," they fail to implement democratic practices in schools. "… [T]he broader themes of socialist construction—participation, democracy, self-reliance, collective responsibility, critical questioning of authority, demystifying expertise—are so little visible in the schools" (Samoff 1991:14). The result is that, once citizens see the gap between the rights that are promised and the opportunities that are really given, they become disengaged from the political process. Participation is replaced by obedience to the authoritarian regime of school authorities with few opportunities for real decision making (Freire and Illich, quoted in Fuenzalinda 1985:1376). When socialist systems break down, as they have in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, a lack of decision-making abilities is evident in the transition period from socialism to market oriented democracy. This was especially evident among educators in the former East Germany, who, once they were not receiving directions from a central authority, were at a loss to know what and how to teach.[1]

Promotion of societal values

Another role given to education is to promote societal values, whatever they may be. It is generally believed that in order for a society to become modern, both socially and economically, education must promote modern values, beliefs, and behavior (Fagerlind and Saha 1989:51). These modern values will help to foster economic, social, and political development. These values will differ depending on the ideological basis of the society.

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[1] Luise McCarty, personal notes

In capitalist societies, some of the values which are promoted are competitiveness, consumerism, and individualism. These values encourage development by "'instilling appropriate motives and aspirations for economic behavior within the capitalist system ... to the extent that the benefits from economic growth in this type of system are thought to 'trickle down' to all members of society, development in a broad sense can be said to occur" (ibid., 72). Thus, education develops the very values which keep the capitalist system running smoothly.

In socialist societies, since the economic system is based on collective ownership, emphasis is placed on less individualistic and competitive qualities and towards group-oriented behavior. The ideal is that "from the socialist schools would come proud and self-confident young people who rejected appeals to racial, ethnic, religious, and regional identities in favor of class and international solidarity, who valued community and cooperation over competitive individualism, who recognized the importance and dignity of physical labor, and who manifested a sense of national and communal responsibility" (Samoff 1991:3). This is the model of the ideal "new socialist person." The goal of education is to promote the socialist ideology that is fundamental to all aspects of progressive development.

If education is seen, then, as a tool for modernization (resulting in development), it must also be connected with the adverse effects of that same modernization process. Some of these effects are the massive imbalances of urbanization, deterioration of traditional values, and the break-up of family structures. The combination of these effects puts a strain on social and economic systems which traditionally have relied on the family and community to hold them together. Education then promotes the values needed for modernization, but society fails to accompany this modernization process with the structural changes needed to form a solid framework for change. This can create more problems than it solves for the development process (Fagerlind and Saha 1989:52–53).

Economic sphere

It has been assumed by many that there is a direct positive link between education and economic development, that is, investment into the educational system will automatically result in positive economic development. This assumption has been called the "human capital theory," which states that an educated population is a productive population. As an outgrowth of this belief, many educational systems, both in developed and developing countries, stress the "production of skills and attitudes necessary for efficient and productive output" (ibid., 78). Yet Fagerlind and Saha claim that this link is tenuous at best. The only link that can be proven is that, in general, educated people are more productive than less educated ones (ibid., 81). Any other links between education and development must be examined on a situational basis.

More often, educational policies have indirect, negative effects in the economic sphere. Many times, strategies and policies in developing countries are patterned after western models which do not meet local situational needs and constraints (Berman 1992:61). Some of these negative effects are outlined below.

1. Because developing countries have limited budgets, they must choose carefully how to spend the limited resources available to them for the benefit of their citizens. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was worldwide growth in educational investment and developing countries were spending large percentages of their budgets on education. Since then, however, many low-income countries have been forced to cut their education budgets by as much as half, unable to maintain the higher spending levels (Fagerlind and Saha 1989:80). This is due in part to high national debts and also to a growing realization that education, in certain situations, uses resources inefficiently. Inefficiency may result if repeater and dropout rates are high, if spending is not appropriately balanced between different educational sectors, or if schools stress skills that are not needed in the economic sphere.
2. A corollary to the point above is that these resources which are being wasted could be better spent in other development areas. Fagerlind and Saha state that "development requires

expenditures in many sectors of society, and if a disproportionate share of limited resources is given to education, less will be available to the needs for investment on other vital sectors of the budget, such as health, welfare, and other infrastructures required to support development policies" (ibid., 55).

3. In some situations, schooling trains people for the wrong kinds of jobs, jobs that are inappropriate to local needs. Anosike reports of a case in Nigeria where large numbers of school graduates remained unemployed, because they lacked appropriate skills to fill needed jobs. Instead, workers with proper skills had to be brought in from abroad (Anosike quoted in Fagerlind and Saha 1989:57). Another case comes from India, where 75 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, yet less than 1 percent of higher education students study in the agricultural field (Arnove 1984:394).
4. If students are trained in inappropriate skills, as mentioned above, the phenomenon of the "educated unemployed" arises, that is, graduates with higher degrees and specific training who are unable to find work in their field. This may be the result of education policy which is mismatched with the real market situation. Also, education itself gives learners unreal aspirations which cannot be fulfilled by the job market (Arnove 1984:394). This unemployment situation puts a burden on the social and economic system.
5. If education is unevenly distributed geographically, there may be a rural-to-urban migration in search of better education and better jobs. Rural populations may feel that the education available to them is inferior (i.e., nonformal education, vocational training), which may result in a migration towards centers with better schools. This migration can put stress on the economic situation in both the rural and urban sectors. Rural areas are left with fewer workers, and urban areas must deal with many new people draining their existing resources.

6. Education also contributes to a phenomenon called "brain drain," which refers to highly skilled and educated people leaving their countries to go somewhere where their skills are more valued, more in demand, or more profitable. This is another form of "wastage," where there is little or no return for educational investment.
7. Related to the problem of unreal aspirations and restrictions on the job market is the problem of credentialism. The demands for education increase, and thus more and more people are released into the job market with ever-higher credentials. This, in turn, escalates the amount of education needed for certain jobs. Credentials are then used as a "screening device" by prospective employers, regardless of actual competencies (ibid., 85). This situation causes more inefficiency in resource use and further cost-benefit imbalance as more and more is spent on higher education, but the advanced level of education comes to mean less and less.
8. The use of education to facilitate manpower planning (characteristic of socialist economies) can also hinder development. Manpower planning—trying to predict what jobs and roles will be needed in the future and setting appropriate education policies—results in a rigid system which is unable to respond creatively and flexibly to change. This situation can lead to similar situations as those described above, such as, educated unemployed, inappropriate skills, and unmotivated workers.

Social structure

Education serves multiple functions within the social structure. It stabilizes and preserves the structure and also provides for mobility within that structure, as allowed by the particular system (ibid., 135). It helps to define the roles that people hold in relationship to one another and in the greater framework of society. As well, "school possesses great socializing power over ... students by virtue of their perception of its ability to offer and implement improvement in their future life chances" (Bock 1982:91).

However, the same factors which promote stability can also cause education to hinder aspects of societal development. This happens most often when there are inequalities within the social structure which education may tend to exacerbate.

When education is used as a means to preserve the social structure, this benefits the elite class which is able to protect its social status. Education can then be used in a "gatekeeping" function, ensuring that only qualified and acceptable people are able to rise to higher levels of status. The elites themselves, as planners and authorizers of the school system, are able to define what knowledge is valid and certified for certain roles (ibid., 95). Education, then, can socialize people to accept the roles which they have been born into, e.g., elites into elite roles and lower-status members into subordinated roles. While the myth of education is of the "great equalizer," the reality is that lower-status people are often socialized by education to fit lower-status roles (ibid., 92). This maintenance of the "status quo" can be detrimental to economic development, because it restricts new initiatives, entrepreneurship, and greater aspirations to accomplish new things (Fagerlind and Saha 1989:49).

In states with a great diversity of ethnicities, languages, and geographic boundaries, there is always a struggle to provide access to education for all. Frequently, this does not happen. Many times, there is great disparity between the amount and quality of education available to rich *versus* poor, urban *versus* rural, male *versus* female, or ethnic majorities *versus* ethnic minorities. Even a country like Costa Rica, whose government considers education a high priority for democratic equalization, has difficulties in providing equal access to education. In 1986, only 9.5 percent of the students in higher education came from the poorest 20 percent of the population, whereas 43 percent came from the richest 20 percent of the population (Reimers 1991:329). Another example of inequality in education comes from India. In 1971, 16.5 percent of the urban population had completed secondary education, as opposed to only 2.1 percent of the rural sector (Arnove 1984:385).

This kind of disparity, spotlighted by inequalities in educational access, can lead to tension, conflict, social unrest, and even violence. "Contrary to the conventional optimism that education can serve as an effective agency for ameliorating group conflict within plural societies, education more often tends to reflect the essential group cleavages of the broader society, and may even intensify them. As a result of the struggle to control education's allocation and legitimization potential, education itself becomes the focus and the source of social conflict" (Bock 1982:96).

As education raises aspirations and hopes, opens up new social roles, and creates new status relationships, conflicts arise which challenge the existing order. Those holding the traditional elite positions see that education is producing a greater number of contenders for positions which were traditionally held by their class (ibid., 97). This situation can lead to corruption, as bribery and political clout are used to procure roles which were formerly allocated based on educational level.

Summary

After consideration of all these factors and situations, it would seem that the limits of education outweigh the positive effects it can have on development. Because of all the limitations that educational systems are under, they cannot hope to live up to all the expectations that are put on them by society. An educational system which is expected to transform society into a certain political or economic mold, or which is used as a panacea to cure societal ills, will likely fail to meet those demands. Instead, a positive relationship between education and development can only be achieved if realistic aims and goals are established which are determined by realistic contextual factors. Only if this positive relationship is established, can education indeed contribute to the development of society by creating citizens, encouraging political participation, promoting societal values, training productive workers, and stabilizing the social structure.

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The REFLECT Approach Used in an SIL Setting

Linda Seyer

Before joinging SIL in 1983, Linda Seyer was a primary school teacher in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She and her husband, David, worked in northern Benin, West Africa with the Biali people for six years doing initial linguistic research before becoming the branch literacy coordinator. In 1990, she received an M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Texas at Arlington. She now works in the Literacy and Development Liaison Unit of SIL in Horsleys Green, England.

1. Introduction

As the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) works all around the world in a wide variety of language contexts, the same questions keep coming up.

- How will the project continue after SIL no longer has a presence?
- Are SIL members really involving the people with whom they are working?
- How can SIL involve local people more from the very start of the project?
- How can SIL teams increase the number of those who enroll in and complete literacy classes?
- How can SIL increase the "ownership" of the local people from the very beginning?

These questions are relevant not only from the perspective of an SIL literacy worker in the field, but they are crucial also to the way that churches, NGOs, funding agencies, and other organizations perceive SIL's work. Steve Simpson describes the questions that arise in interfacing with these agencies as they relate to SIL's commitment to fully partner with those its serves. In examining this issue, he states as follows.

> As I scan some project reports, it is hard to see how local people were involved in strategic planning from the beginning. Most of the time, we outsiders enter a community with goals of what we want to do for them. We have fixed

> notions about how they will be involved .... We need to examine all of SIL's activities. What changes need to be made in SIL training programs so that facilitators, rather than doers, emerge from them? How can our field activities be restructured so that expatriate and national can train together? Do we have the organizational will to reduce the gap between expatriate and national in order to make that happen?" (Simpson 1997:3–4).

Local ownership and participation should be the heart of any successful literacy program. The program exists for and should be developed by the local people whom the literacy personnel are there to serve. Literacy teams should always be open to examining whether the methods they are using are effective in serving people and know why they are using these methods. Part of this examination involves understanding the approaches to literacy that are available and not simply using that which has always been used, simply because it is easier, or the literacy personnel are afraid of change. SIL personnel should be leaders in this area and act as responsible professionals in the area of mother tongue literacy.

After having participated in the International Literacy Conference 1996 in Philadelphia, Sandrine Piaget raises some very important issues concerning the professionalism of SIL in the field of literacy. She commented in the Cameroonian branch literacy newsletter that SIL should have a more open attitude towards new approaches in literacy, emphasizing the need to be more open to collaborating with other organizations whenever possible (Piaget 1996:5). SIL is in an ideal situation. It is on the forefront of influencing the field of approaches in adult literacy, both in sharing from its own experiences and learning from both the positive and negative experiences of other programs.

The REFLECT approach to literacy was developed as an experimental approach in an effort to answer some of the questions raised at the beginning of this article. REFLECT stands for REgenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques. It was been developed by a nongovernmental organization in the United Kingdom (ACTIONAID). The REFLECT approach resulted from ACTIONAID's experiences in development projects in El Salvador, Uganda, and Bangladesh. This new approach is based on the philosophy of Paulo Freire and the utilization of Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques (PRA. It is being talked about all over the world, impacting the countries and contexts in which SIL works. Josef Mueller has stated, "one recent approach has increased the interest of not only of the World Bank but of many development workers, an exceptional event! ... The REFLECT approach replaces prefabricated primers by materials elaborated by the learners themselves .... The REFLECT approach does not make other approaches redundant, but it its based on theory and practice and would seem to be most suitable for some of the small and intensive literacy projects in which lies the future of literacy work ... " (1996:14).

Although the REFLECT approach does have several areas in which it has not been adequately developed, it also has much to offer which can broaden and expand SIL's approach to literacy. It is being increasingly used around the world, and SIL is being confronted with it.[1] SIL members involved in literacy need to study and learn about this new approach and be open to improvement and change when profitable. ACTIONAID, the developers of REFLECT, has invited SIL to give feedback on how the approach can be improved and adapted for the contexts in which SIL works. In order to participate in the dialogue on this new approach, we need to understand it. This gives SIL literacy personnel the opportunity to suggest ways of improving the approach, while it gives them experience with the foundational ideas which they can then adapt to meet the needs of the communities with whom they work. The remainder of this article seeks to first introduce and summarize the approach then present possibilities for how it might be used in an SIL context.

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[1] The countries where REFLECT is being used in adult literacy programs include the following: Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Educador, El Salavador, Guatemala, Lebanon, Egypt, Eastern Sudan, and others. See the ACTIONAID publication, "Education Action," January 1997, Issue 7:14–15.

2. The REFLECT method

2.1 Background and description of the approach

The REFLECT method is based on a combination of the theory of Paulo Freire and the group methods of Participatory Rural Appraisal. It was first experimented with in 1993 in three pilot projects (Bangladesh, Uganda, and El Salvador) as part of a two-year ACTIONAID research project.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, developed a radically different approach to literacy, whereby he linked literacy to social change. Freire "developed the use of what he called 'generative words' for literacy learning. These were words which he felt had a particular cultural or social significance for the group, such as poverty, homelessness, or fear. The words were used as a springboard for discussion at the beginning of each teaching session, and often in connection with an image depicting an aspect of the learner's life" (Fordham et al 1995:66).

The generative words were broken into syllables by questioning the learners. The syllables are used for letter recognition and for creating new words. The dialogue focused on the generative words and was central to the learning process, as Freire's approach to literacy was not so much a methodology as a philosophical approach.

> Freire stressed that reading is more than understanding written language. It entails gaining an understanding of the social, economic, and political situation in which the learners find themselves and the cause behind that situation. By using generative words, he encouraged his groups to question not only written information, but the potential for change within their lives. By starting with words that were emotive and meaningful, he aimed to ensure that reading and writing could be more closely associated with central issues in people's lives (Ibid.).

The methods of PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL (PRA) are seen by the developers of REFLECT as an ideal framework for the learners to be actively involved in the process of becoming literate. PRA was originally developed as a series of techniques for gathering information on community resources and needs before implementing a community development program. The members of the community themselves are active participants in the designing and planning of the project, drawing upon local technical and social knowledge. The techniques include the use of transect walks, maps, calendars, matrices, and diagrams using whatever materials are locally available. The emphasis is on active community participation in the project design and implementation rather than extracting information for research purposes and then imposing a development project designed by external agencies.

The PRA techniques have been used for many types of research including the diagnosis of health needs, local agriculture, and the empowerment of women. When PRA techniques are applied in a learning situation such as a literacy group, the techniques are often referred to as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA). This article only gives a brief mention to PRA as a basis of the philosophical framework of REFLECT; it is not intended to give a full presentation of the development approach. For those desiring more information on PRA or PLA techniques, several good works on the subject are listed below.[2]

The REFLECT approach fuses many aspects of the theory of Paulo Freire and PRA techniques, as it systematically introduces literacy within a group of adult learners. Within this approach, literacy is not regarded as a skill to be acquired but as a process. The adult learners are viewed as active participants, not passive recipients, in the process of becoming literate. The PRA techniques are the tools by which the process takes places. The emphasis is on using the PRA techniques to enable a group of people to assess their felt needs, not just for extracting information for a program or agenda imposed from outside. Being consistent with its Freirian ideological framework, the REFLECT approach rejects the use of primers, as contributing to the "banking" concept of education and treating adult learners as empty vessels to be filled. The developers of

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[2] For further information on PLA techniques, see the TEAR fund publication, "Footsteps", December 1996, Issue number 29, which presents several practical examples of PLA activities, including a review of RELFECT. See also Pretty et al. 1995, Chapters 4 and 5.

REFLECT hold the viewpoint that many groups that purport to use a Freirian-based approach to literacy, are in reality, still using primers (with more socially-based vocabulary) and are still practicing a "banking" type approach to adult literacy. Thus, they have rejected primers in this approach.

Rather than using the emotive pictures in *conscientization* that Freire uses to introduce a topic and corresponding vocabulary, REFLECT uses the PRA techniques such as maps, matrices, and village calendars to investigate a theme of interest to the group of adult learners referred to as a LITERACY CIRCLE. A group FACILITATOR (rather than a teacher) trained in the use of PRA techniques, explores the theme of interest by discussion and dialogue. The group initially records its dialogue and ideas on the theme. An example of such a method would be the study of the theme, e.g., natural resources, using objects such as rocks or drawing in the sand. Gradually, the facilitator helps them move from the ground and concrete objects to a large paper and pencil and graphic symbols (pictures). Chalkboards are not often used, as they do not provide a permanent record.

As the learners become more accustomed to the use of graphic representation, the facilitator begins using letters and words rather than graphic symbols. From isolated words, the group moves larger chunks of language: phrases, sentences, and texts. Through the entire process, the learning circle is keeping a written record of all their dialogue and discussion, thus providing a permanent record of materials they themselves have created on topics of interest. The PRA techniques are very versatile in introducing literacy and numeracy activities to the theme of the group. These techniques include such activities as the making maps of all kinds, calendars, diagrams, charts, and timelines. These items can be on themes of agriculture, health, natural resource conservation, market income and expenditure, and a host of other topics.

The important elements of the REFLECT approach may be summarized by the following quote from *The REFLECT Mother Manual*.

To be consistent with the ideological approach a methodology would have to, for example:

- emphasise writing rather than passive reading of fixed texts
- emphasise creative and active involvement of participants
- build on existing knowledge of participants, respecting oral traditions and other "literacies"
- focus on learners generated materials (not pre-packaged texts)
- ensure that the process is responsive and relevant to the local context
- address the "literacy events" in the wider environment rather than regard literacy as just a classroom activity (Archer and Cottingham 1996b:15).

2.2 Training and selection of group facilitators

The facilitator of the learning circle plays a crucial role in determining the success of REFLECT approach in any particular situation. The selection and training of facilitators is very important, since they are the key to the approach working successfully. *The REFLECT Mother Manual* is the guide to developing local facilitator's manuals for each context and language. The facilitator should be local to the community (in order to promote sustainability), of a similar socioeconomic level, and respectful of the participants of the circle. The larger community should have input into the selection of the facilitator, but the final choice lies with the learning circle itself. The facilitator should demonstrate an attitude of commitment and interest in the participants and have a willingness to learn with them (Archer and Cottingham 1996b:66). In the evaluation made of the initial pilot projects, it has been suggested that a facilitator should have completed a minimum of six years of schooling, although this is not considered as important for success as the attitudes of the facilitator.

2.3 The three pilot projects

The REFLECT approach was initially part of a two-year research project which began in 1993 in three different parts of the world, each with a different social context. In Uganda, the pilot project was in a multilingual area where neither of the two main local languages was previously written. In El Salvador, the pilot project worked with a grassroots NGO, *Comunidades Unidas de Usulutan*, which is led by former guerrillas converting to peaceful methods after ten years of fighting. It was supported by the national NGO, *Corporación Inter-gremial de Alfabetización de la Zona Oriente* (CIAZO). In Bangladesh, the pilot project was with a women's savings and credit group in a conservative Islamic area.

At the end of the two years, the pilot projects were evaluated by both internal and external consultants. In each area of the pilot projects, other comparable groups using more traditional primer-based approaches were used as control groups, so that the effectiveness of the methodology could be evaluated. The general conclusions of the evaluation claim that "the REFLECT approach proved to be both more effective at teaching people to read and write and more effective at linking literacy to wider development. Of those adults who initially enrolled in REFLECT circles, 65% in El Salvador, 60% in Bangladesh, and 68% in Uganda achieved basic literacy over a one year period. This compared to 43%, 26%, and 22% in the respective control groups" (Archer and Cottingham 1996a:i–ii). It is also noted that the drop out rates were much lower than usually encountered in adult literacy programs due to the high motivation factor.

It is very important to note that these initial results, though encouraging, are from an evaluation made after only one year into the program. It is far too early to tell how the participants fared in a wider literate environment and to what extent they have consolidated their literacy skills. For more information on the evaluation methodology of the three pilot projects, see Archer and Cottingham 1995a.

2.4 *The REFLECT Mother Manual*

The REFLECT Mother Manual is a combination of a simple textbook on REFLECT methodology, a guide to the theories and philosophies behind REFLECT, and a practical sourcebook for facilitators. It provides the core materials for developing a REFLECT program in any context. It is well organized and easy to use. The first two sections give an explanation of the background and philosophy of the REFLECT approach, drawing on Freire, PRA, Chambers, and others. The third and fourth sections provide a detailed introduction into using REFLECT techniques and examines the functioning of a learning circle. The fifth section is a selection of sample units in REFLECT, including suggestions on how they might be used. The final section gives ideas for adapting the approach to different contexts and how to integrate it with other participatory approaches. The manual is well worth having as a resource book in any literacy library. *The REFLECT Mother Manual* has been translated into Bengali and Portuguese. Translations into French and Spanish will be following shortly with translation into other languages planned.

The training of REFLECT facilitators usually lasts twelve to fourteen days and provides practical hands-on experience in using the techniques decried in *The REFLECT Mother Manual*. The topics generally covered in the training include the following:

- adult education methodologies
- the theory of REFLECT,
- a gender awareness section,
- reading, writing, and numeracy skills,
- teaching suggestions,
- unit planning and preparation,
- management skills for learning circles,
- assessing participants,
- facilitator and action points, and
- evaluation.

It should be noted that the facilitators create their own local REFLECT manual during the training, using *The REFLECT Mother Manual* as a source book. As more and more organizations and programs show interest in the REFLECT approach, more facilitator training is planned.

3. Advantages of the approach

The REFLECT approach to literacy has several strong advantages that address some the key issues in adult literacy today.

1. **The motivation of the group of learners is strong and continuous throughout the program.** Since the REFLECT units are based on themes coming from the participants themselves and are not imposed from outside, the participants begin with a strong interest in the program, and this motivation continues throughout the program. The drop out rate is said to be lower than with other approaches where the materials are not developed by the participants.
2. **Community ownership and involvement is inherent in the program.** The very content of the units is based on addressing the needs of the community, as the participants themselves see it. It is not necessary to "sell" the materials or classes to the community, the community owns this process from the beginning.
3. **The REFLECT approach builds on local knowledge.** By drawing upon local expertise and experience of the participants to work through the matrices and activities, the approach is continually recognizing and affirming the value of the local knowledge.
4. **It links literacy directly with learner perceived needs and development.** The content of the lessons begins first with a discussion on the needs of the participants, and then moves the selected theme and discussion into the literacy process. This is very different than when the materials devised for the literacy lesson are prepared in advance, as the materials may or may not have anything to do with the felt needs of the participants at that time.
5. **Numeracy is fully integrated into the REFLECT approach rather than tacked on as an afterthought as it is in so many other literacy programs.** The use of numeracy skills is inherent in nearly every PRA unit, e.g., market price calendars and transect walks.
6. **The approach fosters creativity and indigenously- authored literature from the inception of the literacy process.** By the

generation of all literacy materials, the concept of the learners writing and creating their own materials to read is inherent from the beginning.

7. **The REFLECT approach can be adapted to a wide variety of contexts.** This was demonstrated by the diversity between the pilot projects.
8. **In many contexts, the REFLECT approach has been relatively low cost as compared with other approaches.** Because of the generation of materials from the learners themselves and the use of local materials, the costs of the initial literacy materials can be quite low as compared to many other literacy approaches.

4. Weakness of the approach

Some of the weaknesses of the REFLECT approach to literacy are as follows.

1. **The acquisition of literacy skills is not sequential.** There is a serious lack of literacy activities to make the jump from graphic representation to reading words and sentences. Indeed, the methodology of the literacy activities is vague in how the learners move smoothly from beginning literacy with a few vocabulary items to larger chunks of language. One can make the assumption that the methodology is mysterious at this point, because it has not been well developed.
2. **Lack of postliteracy materials into a wider literate environment.** The developers of the REFLECT approach have not dealt with this issue much, although they realize that it is a problem that needs addressing. This is especially true in the context of working in newly written languages, rather than languages of wider communication that already have much developed literature. Even with languages of wider communication such as French and English, the need for developing graded reading materials that are culturally relevant has not been adequately considered in using REFLECT.
3. **Need for highly skilled facilitators.** Although the facilitators do not need to be highly educated, they need to be thoroughly trained in use of PRA techniques and how to manage learning

circles skillfully without dominating them. Unlike highly structured methodologies such as the Gudschinksy approach, which can be passed on and practiced successfully to literacy teachers with a moderate amount of training, this approach requires a highly skilled facilitator for any degree of success. The training carries a heavy load in determining the success of the program.

4. **The implications of using the approach with unwritten languages have not been well-considered.** Although the pilot project in Uganda involved using the previously unwritten language of Bundibugyo, the REFLECT developers do not yet fully understand all that developing a language entails. They have only considered it as a means to carrying out the REFLECT program, but they have not addressed any of the other issues, such as choice of orthography symbols, writing, and the reading and teaching of tone. They seem to regard discussions of these issues as superfluous and only used to keep linguistics as mysterious to the uninitiated. No doubt some experience in dealing with the hard linguistic facts would cure some of their naiveté.

5. Using REFLECT in an SIL context

Admittedly, as with any other approach, the REFLECT approach has both positive and negative aspects. So then, why should it be considered any more than any other approach promoted in recent years? There are several answers to this.

1. **As an organization, SIL must begin finding answers to the questions raised at the beginning of this article.** Not only do these questions arise from SIL's own field programs, but increasingly, those organizations with which sponsor SIL members and with which they cooperate are asking the same questions. The REFLECT approach was based on trying to find answers to these questions, and to some degree it has succeeded. Investigating and adapting the positive aspects of REFLECT may help literacy personnel find answers in their own literacy contexts. In particular, those aspects of REFLECT that increase community involvement and ownership should

be closely examined and then considered for incorporation into any literacy program.

2. **There is a large amount of common ground between the tasks that an SIL language project does and those inherent in the REFLECT process.** The difference is that while SIL does them as isolated tasks, the REFLECT approach integrates into the process. SIL does the initial linguistic research and orthography development that needs to be done to write literacy materials in any language. The REFLECT approach does some of this but needs more. SIL collects ethnographic information on the cultures where it works using both objective and participatory approaches. In doing the same type of research, the REFLECT approach is completely participatory, with a learning circle from a particular community analyzing and recording its own environment and culture. Much of the information gathered is the same.

3. **SIL actively promotes literacy as a value, working with and training local writers to produce material in their mother tongue**. However, because SIL introduces it from outside, its programs often struggle with low motivation. The REFLECT approach begins with community involvement, as it introduces literacy into the process. SIL tends to look at each aspect of its programs separately (with some overlap), e.g., linguistics, translation, literacy, ethnology, and community development. The REFLECT approach begins with all of its aspects as an integrated whole. SIL programs could benefit in integrating each aspect more than it is currently doing and by working for more community participation.

4. **Some of our own literacy methods actually closely parallel certain aspects of REFLECT.** Both the Interactive Whole Language Method and the story track of the Multi-strategy Method actually incorporate many of the same literacy activities with some slight variations. The village calendar in the Interactive Whole Language approach incorporates many of the same type of units found in *The REFLECT Mother Manual*. The writing of stories and the creation of books is nearly identical to the Whole Language activities found in

the Multi-strategy and Big Book methods. The REFLECT method does not have enough of basic skills practice that should accompany these learner-generated materials. This is one area in which many SIL literacy programs are more developed more than those using the REFLECT approach.

5. **The most common weaknesses of many SIL literacy programs are some of the strengths of the REFLECT program.** Many of these have already been described. One weakness is not involving local people enough, thereby increasing local ownership early in SIL language projects. Another weakness is low motivation in literacy classes, which leads to high drop out rates. By utilizing REFLECT techniques some of these negative aspects could even be reversed. REFLECT can help SIL.

6. **Conversely, the least developed and weaker areas of the REFLECT approach are those areas in which SIL has most expertise.** SIL can help REFLECT. These areas, already detailed above, include the following.

   - linguistic concerns: awareness of the issues involved and practical experience in working with previously unwritten languages

   - writer's workshops: experience in training local writers to write in their mother tongue addressing the problem of creating a literate environment

   - indigenously-authored literature: experience in developing graded (easy) reading materials for the new literate, something not even considered in *The REFLECT Mother Manual*. The current REFLECT program would probably be equal to only the preprimer and primer stages of more traditional literacy programs. The postliteracy level is not even dealt with.

   - practical literacy experience in a wide variety of contexts: additional suggestions for literacy activities to strengthen the link from concrete and graphic to written symbols and then to larger chunks of language.

6. Summary

Over the past six decades, SIL's desire to serve those with whom it works has not changed. Yet, the contexts in which it does this work have changed greatly. Meanwhile, many of its approaches and ideas have not changed at the same pace. Making a serious attempt to understand, implement, and even improve on the REFLECT approach is well worth the effort. For many in SIL, it would involve a paradigm shift in their thinking. Not using a primer may even be threatening to many in SIL. The REFLECT approach is not appropriate to all situations and will not solve all problems in SIL literacy programs. There are many places where the primer-based approaches that are being used are effective, and this article is not suggesting that this method replace them. REFLECT is context-specific and flexible, so it readily adapts to the wide variety of contexts in which SIL works. Its strengths address many of the questions with which this paper began, the very questions facing those in literacy field situations. Its weaknesses can be compensated for by the very areas in which SIL has the most expertise, such as the linguistic considerations of writing unwritten languages, developing indigenous literature, and encouraging local authors through writer's workshops. This author would encourage some of the SIL literacy teams to experiment with this new approach where it seems appropriate, contributing to its development in a positive way by sharing their experiences. Let everyone be open to studying and understanding new approaches, so that all literacy programs can be as effective as possible.

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SIL As a Literacy NGO

Nelis van den Berg

Dutch members, Nelis and Bianca van den Berg, have been with SIL since 1991. In 1995, Nelis worked for seven months in the Literacy Development and Liaison Unit (LDLU) in Horsleys Green. There he mainly worked on writing funding proposals for some major SIL literacy programs. Since 1995 the van den Bergs have worked in Cameroon, where they were recently assigned to the East province, primarily to the Makaa language with a regional role in literacy.

1. Introduction

Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) field workers will be aware that SIL is not the only organization working in their country; there are others, often called nongovernmental organizations (NGOS). Despite occasional unwillingness, SIL must cooperate with these NGOs to be effective. But in order to cooperate, SIL needs to identify common ground. Is SIL an NGO as well? And if so, what type of NGO?

How does SIL compare with other NGOs that work in literacy? The importance of this question is that governments and communities see SIL as an NGO, whether its members realize it or not. What are the general characteristics of an NGO, and where does SIL fit into that description? How different is it?

This article will start by defining concepts and describing the characteristics of NGOs in general, then it will look in more detail at the NGOs that are active in literacy before considering the place of SIL in this picture.

2. Definitions

The term, NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION (NGO), covers a very diverse group of agencies and may include churches, medical organizations, foundations, educational institutions, hospitals, and even business and commercial organizations. The term was first introduced by the United Nations and has very quickly found wide acceptance, even though it has a negative definition. For the sake of clarity, this article will use the term in its general sense, which includes a wide variety of different organizations. In development circles, an NGO is normally defined as a nonprofit organization that is formally independent from any government, having a legal charitable status safeguarded by some sort of voluntary council of management[1]. A similar term that is used in North America is Private Voluntary Organization (PVO), but this term is less common and will not be used in this article.

A further distinction often made is that between Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs. Northern NGOs are those based in the so-called developed countries, mainly North America and Europe. Southern NGOs are those that have sprung up in the developing countries themselves, often initially set up or assisted by Northern NGOs.

3. Characteristics of NGOs

As stated, there is a wide variety of NGOs, so only general characteristics can be given. Different aspects that are common to most NGOs will be addressed.

3.1 Funding

Although the importance of NGOs for development is generally recognized, this is not reflected in the size of most NGOs; most are rather small, although there is considerable variation. In most countries a few very big NGOs raise up to 80 percent of the money given to NGOs (OECD 1988). But whether big or small, NGOs are mostly dependent on private donations. This means that they are under pressure to show quick and visible results to their constituency to prove that their individual donations have been well spent (Rogers 1990). Since the public responds to emergencies, funding can be erratic and focused more on relief than development. Another consequence is that the level of income is insecure, so NGOs often cannot commit themselves to long-term projects. A positive side of this insecurity can be that NGOs are forced to promote self-reliance at the local level.

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[1] This definition is based on a suggestion for a minimal definition in Brown 1990.

However, most NGOs are not just dependent on private donations. Many get substantial funding through host governments and large international donors like the Economic Community in Europe (through its co-financing scheme) and the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF). This amounts to 30 percent of the resources of the French NGOs and is similar in other countries (OECD 1988).

3.2 Relationships with governments

Government attitudes to NGOs are very diverse, ranging from active cooperation to a complete ban on NGOs. Despite this, a few general observations can be made.[2]

1. Governments often approach relations with NGOs on a case-by-case basis, based on their own interest and personal relations between NGO staff and government officials, because there is often no official policy regarding cooperation with NGOs.
2. Northern NGOs often find it easier than local NGOs to cooperate with developing nations governments. since they are more powerful and wealthy.
3. Tension in relationships between governments and NGOs is often due to the attitudes of NGOs. These have often criticized developing nations governments, and some have even acted against the interests of the governments.

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[2] The following points are based on Schneider 1988. The observations in this book are based on visits to ninety-three projects in South America, Africa, and Asia.

3.3 Self perceptions

There is a common feeling among NGOs about the specific strengths of the NGO approach. The following list is based on a 1982 study of J. Tendler[3] cited in Rogers 1990.

1. **Reaching the poor:** NGOs claim to be in touch with the poor at grassroots level, as opposed to the major international donors, who often focus on large infrastructural projects.
2. **Participation:** NGOs claim that the local people participate in all their projects, in contrast to the development institutions.
3. **Process orientation:** NGOs claim that their strength is not so much the outcome of a project but the involvement of the poor in a learning process.
4. **Contrast with the public sector:** NGOs perceive themselves as focusing on people-centered development, unencumbered by the bureaucracy and political compromises that characterize governments and their partners.
5. **Flexibility and experimentation:** NGOs claim that small is beautiful. By being small they enjoy the freedom to respond more quickly to specific needs.
6. **Institution building:** NGOs claim to have unique qualities to strengthen local structures and to set up local organizations.
7. **Low costs:** NGOs believe that the costs of their programs are relatively low through their flexibility and their sense of volunteerism.

It is questionable to what extent these claims are justified. There are possible tensions between self-perceptions and reality, e.g., the fact that NGOs are funded through private donations forces them to show results, whilst claiming to be process oriented (point 3 above). These seven points can however be seen as a positive model for the way NGOs relate to communities and how they try to set up their work in general. They could be seen as the "articles of faith" of most NGOs.

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[3] This study is based on a review of seventy-five projects that were funded by USAID.

3.4 Trends in project setup by NGOs

Most Northern NGOs tend to work more and more with local people, keeping expatriate staff to a minimum. Participation with local communities is one of the key issues in NGO strategies. NGOs are trying to involve local communities in all the stages of a project: design, implementation, and evaluation. The goal is to promote local ownership of projects. This is often seen as the main characteristic of the NGO approach (Poulton 1988)!

NGO personnel are often short-term, voluntary workers with the big voluntary organizations such as the British Voluntary Service Overseas and the Peace Corps. Although there are always some long-term staff, this has of course serious implications for training and professionalism of NGOs, especially since most long-term staff are not working in the field.

Relationships between NGOs are often rather limited; there is often a serious lack of coordination of effort. NGOs are trying to improve this situation, but failure to cooperate is still resulting in inefficiency.

A new trend is that Northern NGOs tend to work in close cooperation with their Southern counterparts, thus ensuring cultural relevance, as well as promoting participation of the local people by strengthening the local structure.

4. NGOs in literacy

The roles of NGOs in literacy will now be studied in more detail. The above observations seem to apply equally to NGOs specializing in literacy, especially their community focus.

There are many NGOs working in literacy, but in most cases literacy is not a goal in itself. For example, of the ninety-three projects visited in the study described by Schneider, only seventeen were concerned mainly with training. Many work within the context of a development program, such as farming or animal husbandry. The biggest NGO in Britain, Oxfam, has a policy of not funding projects that are mainly literacy oriented. Their reason for this being that literacy is less directly linked with development than, for example, agricultural projects.

However, literacy is sometimes added to development projects as the need for it becomes obvious. There are also many Southern NGOs whose main focus is education. It is important to realize that most NGOs link literacy and development activities.

The main observation often made about the roles of NGOs in literacy is that most NGO projects are rather small scale. This does not mean that NGOs cannot be involved in mass literacy campaigns; often governments will call upon NGOs to help assist them locally in the implementation of a literacy campaign. But in general, NGOs tend to touch the lives of a limited number of people. This means that NGOs do not play a major role in attaining mass literacy. This does not mean that NGOs do not have a role to play in literacy. Far from it. NGOs will often reach people who are not reached by the large campaigns, e.g., socially weak groups. Another advantage of their small size is that because NGOs are close to the people, they are probably in the best position to mobilize the people and meet the demands of individual communities for literacy.

Lind (1988) concludes that NGOs can only play an important and valuable role in literacy when the state is weak and in need of help from NGOs. Otherwise it can provide schooling itself or manage without NGO efforts.

5. How similar to other NGOs is SIL?

5.1 Funding

Like most NGOs, SIL is mainly funded by private donations. This does not mean there are no differences. Most NGOs receive their private gifts directly, and do not work with a support system like SIL. This means that NGOs tend to pay their workers, often the most important expense; they thus have to restrict the number of expatriate workers in developing countries. SIL is less restricted as to the availability of personnel for project implementation. For large project funding, the situation is more similar to that of other NGOs.

A figure was mentioned above of 30 percent funding from governments and major donors. To what extent SIL receives funding from these agencies for its literacy projects is unknown, but it is probably significantly lower than that.

5.2 Relationships

1. **Governments:** SIL's relationship with various governments is generally good. Although this is not exceptional, there are many NGOs that face a different situation, especially southern NGOs. One aspect worth mentioning is that SIL is less dependent on government funding; many NGOs that are financed to a large extent by western governments lose some of their independence. SIL's advantage is that it has more opportunities to do the things it considers important.
2. **Southern NGOs:** This is a complicated issue. Are the local branches of SIL southern NGOs? They probably should be seen as branches of a northern NGO, but SIL is moving in the same direction as other NGOs by setting up national Bible translation organizations.
3. **Other NGOs:** SIL is very typical in that it does not have close links with other NGOs, however, this situation could and should be improved.

5.3 Project setup

As seen above, not many NGOs are focusing mainly on literacy. SIL does not do so either, but looks at literacy from a totally different background than most other NGOs. For most NGOs, literacy is a tool towards development and part of a tangible development project. For most SIL projects, literacy is mainly a tool to enable people to read the Scriptures. Although we may not always realize it, literacy is highly linked to development in people's minds. This means that where SIL is involved in literacy, policy makers will expect SIL to relate to development as well.

Related to this difference is a distinct way of identifying the target group. SIL identifies its target groups by language, but the rest of the world does not look at it this way. Other NGOs identify their target group mostly regionally, irrespective of language groups living in the area. Consequently, there is also a different approach of literacy. SIL approaches literacy from a linguistic point of view, and functional literacy comes later. Other NGOs work the other way round.

Another point of difference is that SIL projects are often long term, whereas most NGO projects tend to be short term, often with a maximum involvement of five years. The fact that SIL projects are often longer than that has advantages, such as a sense of continuity. There are also disadvantages, e.g., it is easier to keep everything in the hands of the expatriate SIL worker, without encouraging local ownership. Fortunately, many people in SIL realize this. SIL is following the same trend as in other NGOs towards more local involvement.

Although there are differences in approach and motivation, there are some striking similarities. One of the most important is that SIL focuses on local communities, which is a main NGO characteristic. Small-scale literacy projects are the strength of most NGOs that work in literacy. Although as an organization, SIL is large compared with many other NGOs, most SIL literacy projects are small-scale and community-based; in fact, that seems to be the strength of NGOs, including SIL.

6. Conclusion

To what extent is SIL an NGO that fits in the picture that people have of NGOs? One of the main characteristics of the NGO movement is participation and local involvement. Although SIL could and should give more attention to this, it is very concerned with local initiative and local involvement. This means that SIL follows in general the NGO approach. Added to that, most SIL projects are small scale, a feature common with other NGOs.

There are, however, a few minor ways in which SIL clearly differs from most other NGOs, i.e., its organization of funding and personnel, the way it identifies its target group, and its more linguistic approach. But the major difference is the way SIL perceives the impact of its work. Virtually every NGO that is working in the domain of literacy and education has development as its final goal. SIL on the other hand perceives literacy as a tool towards enabling people to read the Scriptures. This makes SIL an unusual development and literacy NGO.

This does not mean that SIL cannot cooperate with these other NGOs; on the contrary, it is very valuable to learn from each other. SIL could probably learn much from the development activities of other NGOs, as well as from their approach to literacy from a development point of view. On the other hand, they could learn something from SIL's linguistic approach of literacy. But this is only possible if SIL members realize that the way they see the world certainly has its merits, but is not the only way.

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Report on the 42nd Annual Convention of the International Reading Association
May 4–9, 1997

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This year's International Reading Association (IRA) convention was held in Atlanta, Georgia and attended by almost 16,000 teachers, administrators, and other educators concerned with reading instruction. The theme, "Lives in the Balance—Linking Literacy and Learning," reflects a desire to see reading instruction integrated into a student's overall learning experience and not as an isolated subject taught in a vacuum.

A major task in attending this convention was wading through the 296-page program guide to choose which sessions to attend. I chose mostly those concerned with reading methodology, however, I was not at the Tuesday morning session where, according to the *New York Times*, "some fiery exchanges occurred" between Kenneth Goodman (a leader in the whole language method) and Edward Fry (a publisher of phonics charts)[1]. The dozens of teachers interviewed were not concerned with this political debate but used an eclectic approach that incorporated elements of both phonics and whole language. Teachers said the debate was distracting, although it had a benefit in convincing educators to use a phonics component with their innovative whole language approaches.

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[1] "Teaching Children to Read: Politics Colors Debate Over Methods." The New York Times Sunday, May 11, 1997.

I was encouraged to find that a number of the experts were saying the same things I and other literacy colleagues have been saying, that is, "we don't really know what happens when a person learns to read so we should use both approaches." Dr. Glenda Lofton said that after spending years of studying the research, the results are inconclusive, and we should do both. Reading is as complicated as thinking. If we understand reading, we will understand thinking. A time line showed how the pendulum during the last century swung between a global and an analytical approach. "If phonics is the answer, why do we occasionally abandon it?" Lofton stressed that we need to know what we believe, why we believe it, and then be able to explain it. This is particularly important in U.S. school districts and states where the issue is a critical political issue.

Learning styles were also discussed. Although some sessions presented miracle stories of deficient readers being healed with a shot of phonics, others brought out the point that those often targeted for such remedial work are more global in learning style. Since the language groups SIL works with often have a global learning style, that gives weight to the whole language method. Yet phonics is still important, as somewhere along the line learners need to know the letter sounds, and the phonics method is more efficient with the more phonemic alphabets SIL works with than it is with English.

At first, I found the current jargon alienating, but a colleague reassured me that one could probably master it in a week or two. Those of us who have been isolated for a number of years can be encouraged that we are using strategies such as interactive reading, peer editing, conferencing, emergent reading and writing, process writing, giving a voice, and scaffolding, even though we may not have realized it.

Featured distinguished speaker Jane Davidson, professor emeritus, Northern Illinois University emphasized that reading is a thinking process; ownership with no fear of failure is needed; individual differences and language idiosyncrasies need to be valued; skills should be taught as needed; and the model of the empty head being filled with knowledge is insulting. She gave a summary of the leading contributors to modern reading instruction starting with the early 1900s. One milestone noted was the work of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, a Berkeley professor who wrote, *The Here and Now Storybook* in 1921, realistic fiction with cultural and historical facts. This was very controversial, as children in that era were being raised on fantasy and fairy tales. The "Activity Movement" (1925–35) stressed problem-solving activities based on experience and need with children setting the purposes. Davidson heavily criticized the basal method of the 1960s with its reading levels, often designated by bird names. She said students in the lowest group (often called the "Buzzards") got locked in and never could get out, particularly because the middle group (the "Magpies") was too full, so there was no room for them. She quoted a man who said his entire goal while in school was to get out of that lowest reading group, and he never could. She also stated that no research ever existed to support the basal method and scope. No research supported individualized reading either, except that children read more and had positive attitudes.

Although the IRA is international in name, the focus and slant of the convention was largely American. Many of the principles and ideas presented, however, could be used or adapted for different situations. The interactive reading presentation began with the familiar principle "tell me and I will forget, show me and I will understand, involve me and I will remember." Different activities were then demonstrated. For example, the story pyramid presented a way to choose words and phrases to describe various elements of a story, e.g., one word telling who the main character is, two words to describe him, three words to describe the setting, and so on. When I have asked writers in writers' workshops to describe, summarize, or tell me the main points of their stories, they almost always give a detailed retelling of their composition. A story pyramid could help with this.

"Reading Recovery in First Grade" presented five things a good reader does to figure out a difficult word.

1. Think about what words would be appropriate in the story
2. Use the picture as a clue. This is not cheating
3. Go back to the beginning of the phrase or sentence. Get the mouth ready with the first sound of the word, and sometimes the word will come.
4. Look for chunks that can be said.
5. Does it make sense?

A video demonstrated a young reader describing how she uses these techniques and the happiness and sense of accomplishment she felt in becoming a good reader.

A special interest group on the Language Experience Approach introduced a high school teacher accompanied by some of her students, who shared refreshing and candid insights on what the teacher's journalism course had meant to them. One girl had hated school until she took the course, which she said revived a joy she had not had since kindergarten. Reflecting on the positive learning environment, she stated, "I wish I could have kept that kindergarten outlook all throughout high school."

The place where SIL members can make the greatest contribution to this massive enterprise is with the Literacy Issues in Developing Countries Interest Group. Presentations were given about programs in various countries, and they are hoping to have someone from SIL included in the schedule next year.

My major complaint was that (too) many session leaders said they were not expecting so many people and so they did not have enough handouts. They did, however, promise to forward material to us. A few sessions were canceled without prior warning leaving participants scrambling to find another one to attend. The Director of International Development for the IRA pointed out that a session on fostering international partnerships should not have been scheduled at the same time as "Literacy Issues in Developing Countries." However, overall the conference was a logistical masterpiece. If one studied the program carefully enough and did not get lost, good use could be made of the time.

Review

Literacy and Script Reform in Occupation Japan: Reading Between the Lines. By J. Marshall Unger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. pp. 176.

Reviewed by Ingrid Toba

Ingrid Toba was born and educated in Germany. She has an M.A. in German and classical philology and German literature. She worked with SIL *in South Asia from 1970 until 1976 and has since worked in a variety of roles involved with literacy.*

I still have a note my son, Ken, wrote after his first visit to the dentist: "This is the tooth the dentist took from the mouth of Ken Toba" (the tooth was taped to the note). This sounds simple enough in English, but it is hilariously funny for anyone familiar with the Japanese writing system. My young son was proud to be able to read and write his own name in the "proper" way, that is, with Chinese characters. So, he used these characters as much as possible (for their phonetic value only), while in reality, in addition to the phonetic value, each character has its semantic contents. Therefore, while "Toba" and *totta* (took) both contain the same sound-syllable [to], the characters have different semantic contents which resulted in Ken producing something of a pun for Japanese readers who read the meaning first. The rest of the note was written in the straightforward and easy to master syllabary. I kept this note, because it is not only funny but also indicative of the confusing system Japanese people must master in order to become literate.

While reading J. Marshall Unger's book, *Literacy and Script Reform in Occupation Japan: Reading Between the Lines*, I was reminded of my son's note. The book deals with the specific and problematic subject of the Japanese writing system, the difficulties it presents for literacy, the possibility that it stifles creative writing ability, and the attempts at reforming it. At least one of the reasons for the failure of the experiment during occupation lies in the fact that using Chinese characters still is considered unquestionably the proper way of writing Japanese.

Before embarking on the main part of the book, the author briefly classifies languages as to phonographic versus logographic. In this scale, Finnish is closest to the phonographic end, while Chinese and Japanese are on the logographic end. Also described is the Japanese writing system which consists of imported Chinese characters, i.e., *kanji* (which are used for most word stems and names). In addition, there are two systems of syllabic symbols called *kana* with which one can write Japanese quite phonetically. They differ in their use (*hiragana* is used for some word stems, endings, and particles; *katakana* is used mostly for foreign loans and scientific names). Given names are written in either *kanji*, *hiragana*, or *katakana*. The purpose of the introductory presentation and discussion is stated as "to begin undermining the notion that *kanji* fulfill some sort of mystical role in the Japanese writing system that makes them indispensable" (Unger 1996:21).

The following two chapters give some historic background of attempted script reforms undertaken by Japanese during the Meiji Period 1868–1912, when efforts were made to catch up with Western-type civilization, science, and technology. The most radical reform suggested that Japanese be replaced altogether by a simplified form of English! Literacy in Japan is studied, and the method of measuring de factor literacy by percentage of school attendance is questioned. The degree of literacy necessary to be functionally literate is also discussed. This is a very relevant issue in a setting with such a complicated writing system as is found in Japan and perhaps extends to wherever literacy either involves primarily memorization or where a foreign writing system must be used to write a given language.

Thus the scene is set for the main part of the book which deals with the efforts and methods of script reform by the occupation forces during the years of occupation after World War II. The experiment with the teaching and use of the Roman alphabet is discussed in detail. Both charts of achievement and positive responses from teachers and parents show that the experiment appeared to be highly successful from the point of education, at least in places where there was active or enthusiastic cooperation on the part of schools. It, therefore, comes as a shock to read that experiment was stopped abruptly and never again taken up again. Why?

To answer this question, one has to "read between the lines." Script—the written form of any given language—and script reform not only pertain to education and literacy but affect all of life. In the case of the attempted script reform in post-war Japan, it was a variety of reasons, political and personal, in addition to the difficulties of cross-cultural communication which seems to have caused the experiment to fail. In concordance with my own experience of living in Japan, there was and is to this day—in spite of the presence of progressive minds who enthusiastically supported the experiment—strong conservative "native reaction." As stated in his introduction, the author set out to "begin to undermine the notion that *kanji* ... are indispensable," but looking at reality, there is yet a long way to go.

Although this book seemingly deals with the specific topic of script reform in Japan, it is, nevertheless, of interest to anyone involved in a literacy project where script from one language is used to write another, unrelated language. Reaction of mother-tongue speakers, cultural factors, tradition, level of education, and social standing of individuals involved in decision-making are all factors mentioned here which may hinder or further a project. Language is inseparable from culture, especially when it is written language.

In the case of Japan, the reluctance to give up *kanji*, even if they are proven to be not "necessary," shows a strong native reaction. This was further confirmed by the reaction of my friends when I asked them if they had ever thought of a reform which would replace *kanji* by either *kana* or Roman letters. They were incredulous and insisted that *kanji* were absolutely necessary to understand the meaning of words. They exhibited the same attitude as my son when he wrote his note: the proper way to write Japanese is by using as many *kanji* as one can.

Practically speaking, as a result of my reading this book, my attitude of insisting on a "logical" orthography changed to one of accepting the suggestion of my mother-tongue coworker. After all, it is his mother tongue, not mine! As an outsider, I feel now, I have no business to insist on what is logical in my view. I should add that the language concerned belongs to a language family different from the national language and that the national language uses a non-Roman script. By establishing the orthography in the national script, we ran into problems, such as marking tone and creating additional vowel symbols. But the biggest and most unexpected problem came with my "logical" solution to write a sound phonetically similar to one found in the national language with the same symbol used for that sound in the national language. It was here that the "native reaction" won against the "logic" of the outsider.

Though dealing with a topic of seemingly limited interest, this book makes for interesting reading. The reader is given sufficient information to be able to follow the train of thought of the discussion of a rather special case history of script reform (attempted but not carried out). Yet the presentation does not indulge in unnecessary detail. Literacy workers involved in cross-cultural projects will profit by reading this account. There are meaningful tables to illustrate points made by the author. Educational policies and their authors are discussed. Appendices contain relevant documents. A glossary of Japanese terms helps those not familiar with Japanese, and instead of footnotes there are notes in the back. The references section contains plenty of information, both directly related to the topic as well as for a wider context, and finally, there is a carefully prepared index. I highly recommend this book for literacy personnel faced with script concerns.

notes on

LITERACY

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NOTES ON LITERACY

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The Place of Mother Tongue Literacy in Social Development in Three African Contexts

Margaret Langdon

Margaret Langdon attended the Bible Training Institute, Glasgow 1968-70, where she obtained a London University Diploma in Theology. She joined SIL in 1970, and after receiving training, went to Ghana 1973. In Ghana, she worked in finance for two years, in the Mampruli project for a year, and in the Konkomba project (literacy) for five years to 1981. After French study, she worked as a librarian to SIL at Horsley's Green. Margaret spent two years in Zaire involved in literacy and administration for the Ngbaka project. In 1989, she began working in Burkina Faso, first in the finance office, then with the Karaboro project (literacy) for five years. After completing her M.A. at Reading University, she is currently working in the Dogose project in Burkina Faso.

Rural communities the world over manage to live out their lives with scant reference to anything written, and literacy workers can testify to their apparent willingness to continue to do so, in spite of repeated attempts to get them involved in literacy activities. Can literacy, then, be said to be crucial to development?

Perhaps the key lies in what we consider to be development. Is there a natural progression through orality to literacy, technology, and wealth such as modernization theories would suggest? Or have the peasant subsistence farmers got it right, when they resist moves towards commercialization and urbanization and maintain their traditional way of life, putting safety first?

This article shall look first at what constitutes development, especially in the context of peasant subsistence farming and then move on in section 2 to describe the three ethnolinguistic contexts which form the background to this study. Sections 3 and 4 shall examine what is meant by literacy in contrast to orality and how it might relate to development in such societies and finally some conclusions shall be drawn.

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1. Development and the peasant society

> Anthropologists have recognized distinctive levels of sociocultural integration, ranging from band and tribal societies to chiefdom, state and complex industrial societies in the modern world. The concept of social environment applies to a smaller unit of comparison that may be found in any one of these levels of sociocultural integration (Lingenfelter 1992:41).

In considering what constitutes development, it needs to be determined what or who is being developed, since the social environment will influence how the unit develops which in turn will affect the social environment. Much of the material for this article has been drawn from the writer's experience of living and working with three African ethnolinguistic groups which could be broadly classified as peasant societies, i.e., small-scale cultivators with a relationship to land, with some degree of access to and control over it, while also being part of a larger society (as defined by Patricia Goldey from Redfield 1953; Wolf 1966; Pearse 1970).

"The outsider sees the peasant primarily as a source of labour and goods with which to increase his fund of power. But the peasant is at once an economic agent and the head of a household. His holding is both an economic unit and a home" (Wolf 1966:13). "Not the city, but the state is the decisive criterion of civilization and it is the appearance of the state which marks the threshold of transition between food cultivators in general and peasants. Thus, it is only when a cultivator is integrated into a society with a state—that is, when the cultivator becomes subject to the demands and sanctions of power-holders outside his social stratum—that we can appropriately speak of peasantry" (Wolf 1966:11). How can a person in this situation regulate the demands laid upon him without incurring unacceptable sanctions?

If, as Robert Redfield (1960:46) says, the social structure can be seen as a set of signposts to the good and virtuous life, the dilemma of the peasant is that the signposts do not all point the same way. He may find him in a market system where prices are no longer regulated by local exigencies, but by "ever stronger forces of demand and supply which he may not entirely understand and which he certainly does not control" (Wolf 1966:42). The tendency then is to retreat into the known, independent world, where his fortune is governed by the natural (and supernatural) rather than the human world. "His caloric minimum and his replacement fund will be primary, together with such ceremonial payments as he must make to maintain the social order" (Wolf 1966:13). Beyond these needs, he may decide to enjoy his freedom rather than amass wealth of other kinds or expose himself to the risks of fluctuating markets. "The perennial problem of the peasantry thus consists in balancing the demands of the external world against the peasants' need to provision their households. Yet in meeting this root problem peasants may follow two diametrically opposed strategies. The first of these is to increase production; the second, to curtail consumption" (Wolf 1966:15).

Given this situation, what constitutes development for the peasant society?

1.1 What is development?

> Development should ultimately be defined as a process which enhances the fulfilment of human potential — the realization of "human personality", and of "human capabilities" and a growing capability to satisfy human needs and desires in a variety of domains including the psychological, cultural, social, political and even spiritual (Charlick 1984:34 quoting Seers and Goussault).

Too often in the past, development has been seen in terms of economic growth, but the unfortunate truth is that many development efforts have resulted in the rich getting richer at the expense of the poor. "Development is a series of changes in which people improve their capacity to organize themselves and use available resources to support their own well-being on a basis that is self-sustaining and generally accessible to them as people" (Charlick 1984:35). "The process of development is now widely understood to include growth in capability to satisfy human material needs, and non-material needs such as empowerment, through participation in decisions (demands). Development also involves broadening access to all the gains, and building capability for sustaining the process through growth in ability to generate and manage resources (support) with some degree of self-reliance" (Charlick 1984:37). Development implies community, something which may be lacking in peasant society because each household is autonomous. On the other hand the household may be almost as large as a small village and intermarriage networks may be quite strong. "[T]he negotiation of norms both reaffirms and requires community. The building of consensus is the building of community through the development of a shared account of themselves as a group. Communities build through repeated interactions among the individuals that constitute them ..." (Penelope Eckert in Tannen 1993:39).

"Development starts where the people are ... those we work with are already involved in a process of change" (Rogers 1992:131). Both modernization and structural dependency theories of development strike at the heart of the peasant dilemma. He does not want to leave behind the security of the known for the uncertain advantages of change, because, barring natural disaster, he is self-sufficient. The resources may not be very great and the environment is risk-prone, but they are known dangers, and, for the most part in the societies that will be mentioned, free from the vagaries of world markets, although as structural dependency shows, this may only be a matter of time. As we shall see, for the Konkombas (see map in the Appendix), being seen as a source of labor and goods has meant the ever-present threat of domination and violence, while for the Karaboro (see map in the Appendix) it is the gradual disappearance of arable land and the clash with pastoralists for what is left that precipitates the crisis. For the Ngbaka (see map in the Appendix) there is no great crisis except the state of the country's economy, and the farmer is in the strongest position to withstand that. The answer, then, as to what constitutes development will be different for each of these groups. The essential is to see it as "a process of planned change" (Rogers 1992:50) in which those primarily concerned are themselves enabled both to plan and to institute the changes deemed to be necessary. Part of this enabling is the facilitating of dialogue with the outside world, and also amongst themselves, since these are very independent peoples there are "certain isolationist tendencies on the part of the Karaboro people" (Walter 1996:23). "Social development builds bridges between and within rural populations" (Sellamna and Brown 1995:3).

In the drive for economic growth, it is tempting to introduce technology and machines to speed production and ease heavy labor thereby destroying the social intercourse enjoyed over routine chores. "He who does his work like a machine grows a heart like a machine, and he who carries the heart of a machine in his breast loses his simplicity. He who has lost his simplicity becomes unsure in the strivings of his soul" (Chinese sage when urged to improve his efforts with a machine, quoted in McLuhan 1964:74). Chinua Achebe brings the opposing point of view. "Why should I start waging war ... on the 'soulless efficiency' of Europe's industrial and technological civilisation when the very thing my society needs may well be a little technical efficiency?" (Achebe 1988:29) Those intimately concerned need to be free to choose.

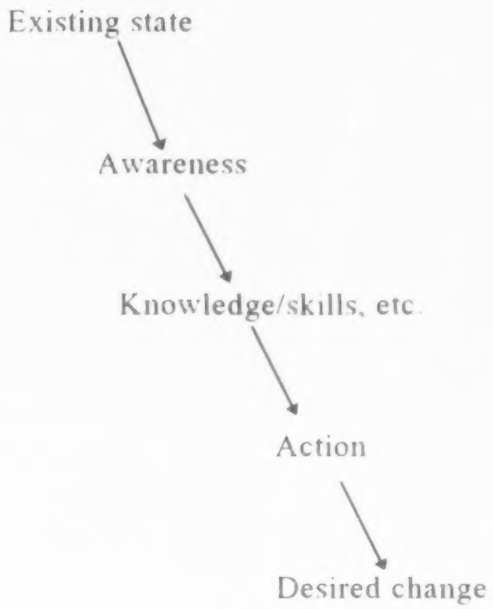
"Agronomists, agriculturalists, public health officials, co-operative administrators, literacy educators we all have a lot to learn from peasants, and if we refuse to do so, we can't teach them anything" (Freire 1985 quoted Archer and Cottingham 1996:11). The importance of this dialogue will be demonstrated in the next section.

1.2 A methodology for development

Development, like adult education, is an encounter between equals "teaching and learning on equal terms" (Rogers 1992:156).

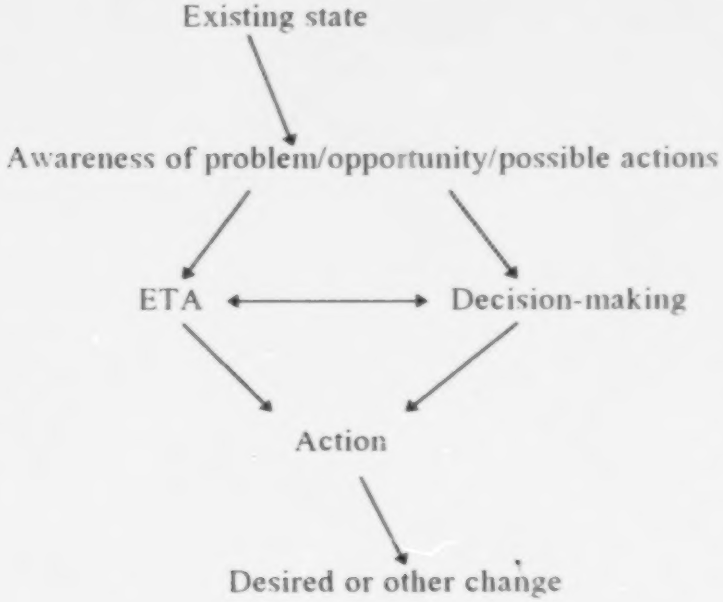
Alan Rogers has a most helpful chapter on routes to change (Rogers 1992:118 30). In it he diagrams the steps essential to effective development (see fig. 1) and then indicates how some development initiatives bypass certain stages.

Figure 1. Steps essential to effective development



"It may be possible to achieve some measure of planned change while leaving out one or more steps in the path, but permanent development calls for all stages—developing critical awareness; developing a solid base of knowledge, skills and understanding; engaging in a program of social action." Rogers raises the question as to when decisions should be made about the type of action: if the decisions are made before the education and training, the participants are not able to make informed judgements about what they will do, but if the decision-making is delayed until they have attained the knowledge, skills, and understanding, motivation may be low in the learning stage as the participants may be unable to see the relevance of what they are doing. In a dynamic approach, there is likely to be some education intermingled with some decision-making, with the two processes working together (see fig. 2 on the next page).

Figure 2. Possible interactions in a dynamic change process


Existing state
Awareness of problem/opportunity/possible actions
ETA
Decision-making
Action
Desired or other change

> How far can we use adult education as a tool for what some will see as mass persuasion? ... The answer to our question ... must lie in the attitudes of the adult educator towards the learners and towards the subject matter of the program. A deep concern for the participant group, and a belief in the importance of the task in hand coupled with a willingness to share on an equal basis—in other words, holding both a conviction of the truth and at the same time an openness to learn: in this double approach will lie the justification for Development adult education. And if we display this attitude of sharing, then there should be no problem in our groups considering in depth what is being shared. We are not engaged merely in educating people to agree with the Development or adult education agency: we are engaged in a process of sharing, in the course of which both sides will take each other seriously; and both sides will inevitably move their position (Rogers 1992:239).

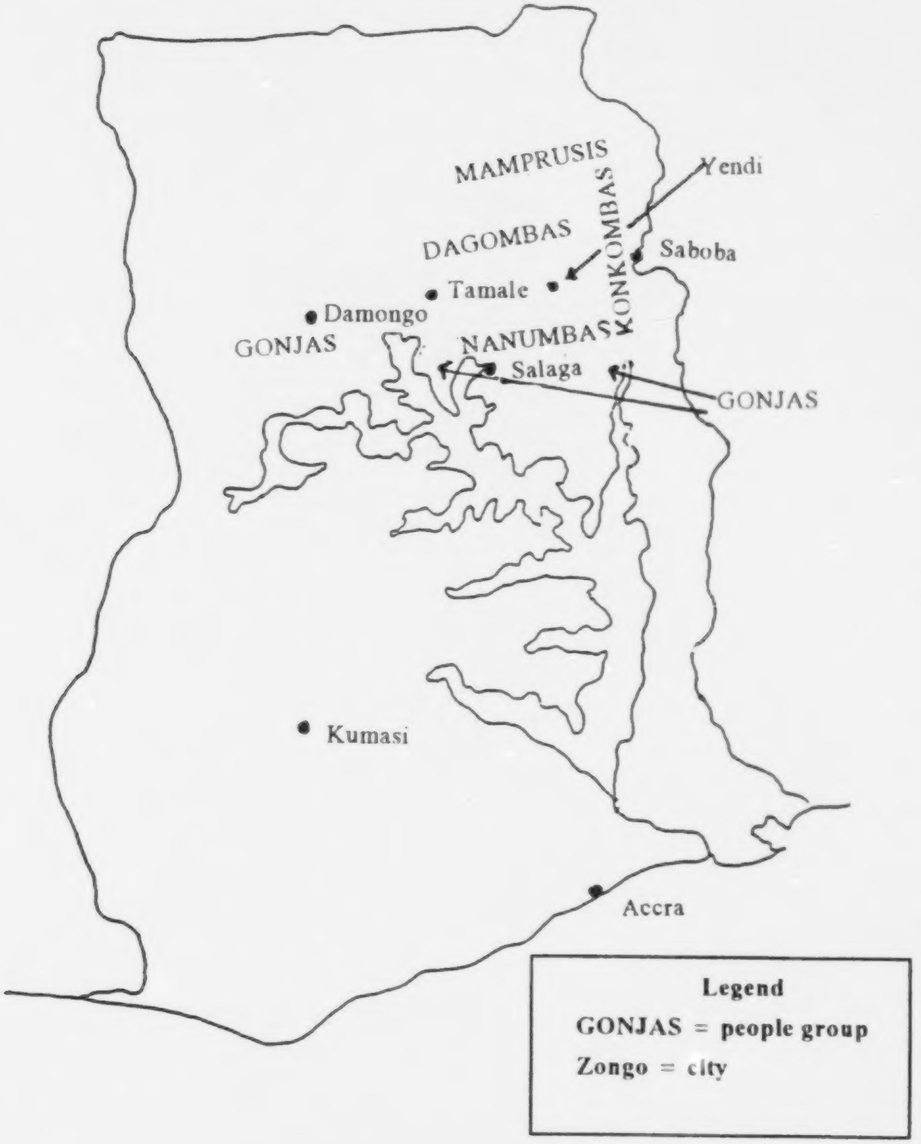
How far can we use literacy as a tool for adult education? What is literacy anyway? These questions shall be addressed in sections 3 and 4 taking into consideration the fact that "definitions of literacy must be context-sensitive: that is, they must be sensitive to the social purposes, demands and processes within which they are constructed" (Baynham 1995:8) and that the societies of which we are thinking rarely make use of the written word in their daily lives. The particular societies under discussion will be examined first, so that later references to them are contextualized. "An ethnographic perspective enables us to see how literacy is incorporated into the receiving culture's already existing conventions and concepts regarding communication—the 'subjects' are not 'tabula rasa' as many development literacy campaigns appear to assume" (Street 1993:25).

2. Ethnographic context

> [T]he reality of social relationships ... demands that each "society" ... be treated as part of a field of interaction that takes account of neighbouring peoples, the mutual influence of town and village, the nature of long-distance trade and wider religious affiliations (Goody 1968:199).

The language groups considered in this article are quite distinct and are to be found in three different countries. They are the Konkomba of northeastern Ghana, the Karaboro of southwestern Burkina Faso, and the Ngbaka of northwestern Zaire. In each case projects were initiated with the aim of raising the level of mother tongue literacy in the language group and subsequently enabling the new literates to use their skills in other languages of wider communication. Basic reading primers were produced together with simple postprimer reading materials such as collections of local proverbs and folk stories, local author booklets such as jokes, riddles, marriage guidance, and discussion of the problems of migration, newspapers, translated materials of an instructional nature on subjects like health, numeracy, religion, the environment, gardening, and geography, and bridge materials to the national language, including bilingual dictionaries Konkomba-English, English-Konkomba and Karaboro-French, French-Karaboro.

Map 1. Ghana (including the Konkomba area)


MAMPRUSIS
KONKOMBAS
Yendi
DAGOMBAS
Saboba
Tamale
Damongo
GONJAS
NANUMBAS
Salaga
GONJAS
Kumasi
Accra
Legend
GONJAS = people group
Zongo = city

Literacy rates in the Konkomba and Karaboro societies were very low in the early days of the projects—the Konkomba rate was said to have been 1 percent (in funding applications made in 1978 based on an earlier census) and the rate for Burkina Faso between

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10 percent and 20 percent (Walter 1996:9), with Karaboro being at the lower end, probably below 10 percent in 1990. In effect, this meant that some villages or hamlets could boast of one or two semi-literate young men who had either dropped out of primary school because of difficulties in learning due to such things as language problems, or who, although unschooled, had had sufficient initiative and motivation to teach themselves with the aid of school children or by other means. (These highly motivated ones frequently proved to be the most effective teachers.) It was rare to find anyone who had completed primary education, perhaps because there was an implicit assumption that education leads to urbanization. Two Karaboros were graduates of Koranic schools, but as they had also had primary school education it would be difficult to say which had had the greater influence. Literacy rates were higher among the Ngbaka, said to be 15 percent (verbal report), mainly due to the fact that there had been widespread conversion to Christianity and many of the churches had engaged in literacy teaching in the local trade language Lingala.

2.1 Konkomba

> If we look at northern Ghana ... we find an area where states and acephalous tribes interact in a number of contexts. From the military point of view, the states (Gonja, Mamprusi, Dagomba, Wa and Nanumba) dominated the stage ... (Goody 1968:199).

Estimates of the population of the Konkombas, whose homeland is the area surrounding Saboba to the east of Yendi in Northern Ghana, vary widely between two and four hundred thousand. David Tait describes this area as "alternatively a swamp and a dust-bowl" (Tait 1961:11), and it is undoubtedly this inhospitable terrain which has caused the large-scale migration to the south and west into what is generally accepted as Dagomba, Nanumba, and Gonja territory, although there is evidence that some, if not all, was originally Konkomba land. "Of all their neighbours the Dagomba are the most important to Konkomba, since it was the Dagomba who expelled them from what is now eastern Dagomba. '[T]hey (our forefathers) stayed in Yaa (Yendi) .... The Dagomba were in Tamale and Kumbungu.' [T]he Dagomba invasion ... occurred in the early sixteenth century" (Tait 1961:4). "The Dagomba kingdom was one of a cluster of states created by groups of migrant cavalrymen moving south and imposing themselves as a ruling class on established stateless peoples" (Staniland 1975:3).

Serious analysis of the Konkomba language prior to developing a phonemic orthography began in the early 1960s, and wide-spread literacy activities in the mother tongue (Konkomba) have been taking place since the late 1970s and are now under the auspices of KOLADEP (Konkomba Literacy and Development Programme), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) under Konkomba leadership. "Co-operative ventures organised by women, including small scale farming, *pomade* and soap making" and the financing of supervisors from their own sources are among the development activities (Herbert 1990:24). Many of these activities have been curtailed from time to time due to conflicts with the Dagombas, Nanumbas, and Gonjas, but efforts to resume them have been made in more peaceful times. It has been common for the dominant peoples to require a percentage of the harvest and occasionally to exact it with violence.

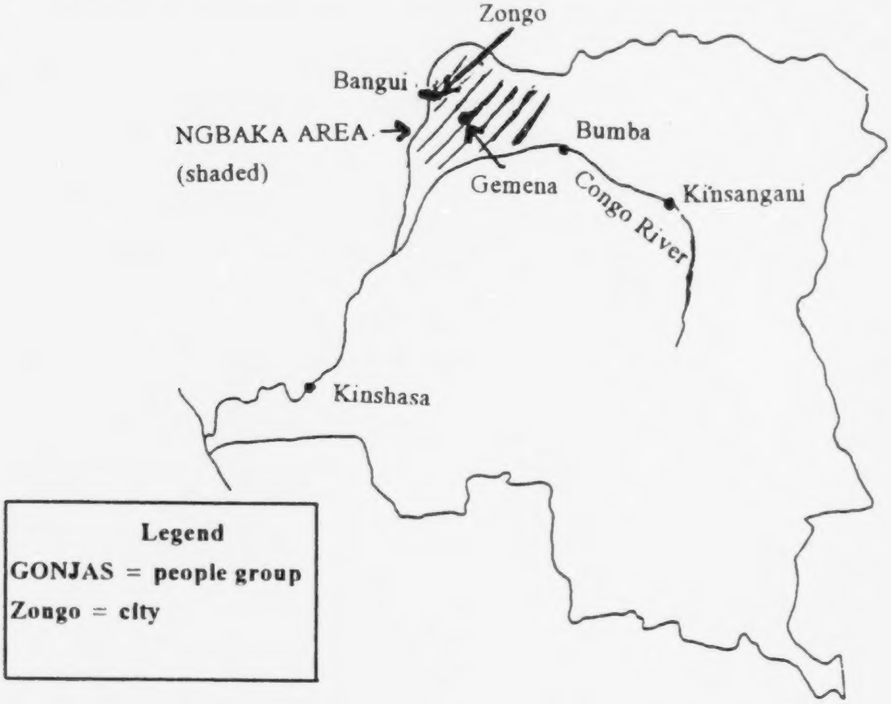
Attendance at primary schools was less than 20 percent in 1975 (Rowland 1975:5). A national mass literacy campaign launched in the 1950s under the auspices of the government Department of Community Development, using English as the language of instruction, left the Konkombas virtually untouched. UNESCO's EWLP program in 1973, using the "Ghanaian language spoken and written in the area" was similarly ineffective for the Konkombas because no materials were available in the language (Rowland 1975:4). As farmers, Konkombas paid scant attention to traders and the associated Islam, retreating further and further away from towns and roads as these developed. Since government and other schools were mostly to be found along the roads or in the towns, only those within a reasonable distance attended them.

The literacy strategy adopted was one of individual instruction of representatives from each of the villages with the aim of enabling them to teach others in their village. Many of these instructors or their students subsequently migrated and set up further classes in their new locations. It was sometimes possible to gather these people together for a more formal course, but much of the teaching was done by peripatetic supervisors (who were drawn from those who had already successfully taught in their own village). Most of the teaching was done at night after work on the farms, and, although girls attended classes initially, their parents soon expressed anxiety about these evening activities and refused permission for them to attend. As classes began to be established during the daytime in the dry season, more women were able to become involved. Demand for school education has increased.

2.2 Ngbaka

About 2 million Ngbaka people live in the northwest of Zaire (currently the Democratic Republic of Congo). One Catholic and two Protestant church communities were established during the latter part of this century, using Lingala as the language of instruction in the churches and French in the schools.

Map 2. Former Zaire[1] (including the Ngbaka area)


Zongo
Bangui
NGBAKA AREA
(shaded)
Bumba
Gemena
Congo River
Kinsangani
Kinshasa
Legend
GONJAS = people group
Zongo = city

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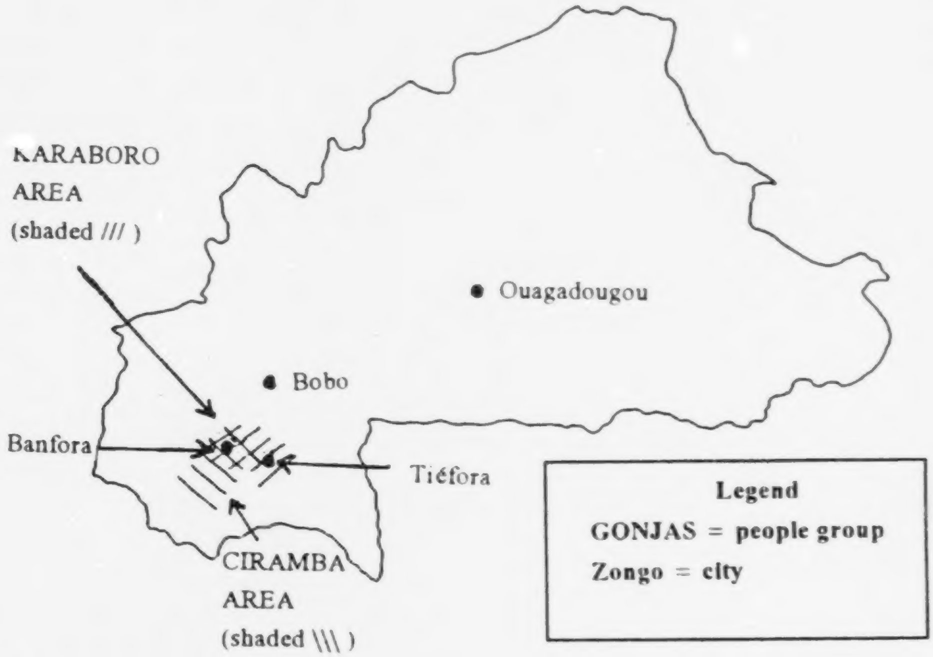
[1] Editor's note: The African country formerly known as Zaire is currently called The Democratic Republic of Congo. As this article was written during the time in which the country was called Zaire, I have left it as such.

A program of mother tongue literacy was introduced through the churches in the early 1980s, and this has proved very popular. The program has over 3,000 classes and six levels of instruction, including some Lingala from the third level and some French at higher levels. A number of students have been able to enter school and continue in French. Owing to the unstable political situation and deteriorating government services, most educative activities are carried out under the auspices of the churches, who run church schools and literacy classes in the churches. They also run establishments teaching practical skills such as carpentry and animal husbandry.

2.3 Karaboro

The Karaboro are found in the southwest of Burkina Faso and number around 50,000. Linguistic analysis and the development of an orthography began in 1974 resulting in a body of literature for the eastern dialect, which is spoken by about 30,000 people. Literacy activities were not welcomed by this conservative people. A government campaign named Alpha Commando, launched after the revolution in 1983, attracted some interest, however, possibly because there was some financial remuneration for the participants. It was organized by the agency known as the ORD (*Organismes regionaux de developpement*—regional development institutions), later to become the CRPA, and used the local trade language Jula. There was an attempt at forming village cooperatives; some of these flourish today, though none are controlled by the Karaboros. The campaign continues in various forms: currently various NGOs, such as, Save the Children and Project Rice teach basic skills in association with their other activities, and some projects are still able to remunerate participants. Annual coordination meetings are called by the local government department responsible for literacy and basic adult education (*Service d'Alphabétisation*—Literacy Service), but Karaboros are unrepresented in the department and must use the Jula language if they wish to participate. Most choose not to participate. Required in the curriculum is discussion of development topics, reading, writing, and numeracy. Attempts to promote mother tongue literacy in Karaboro have been made since the late 1980s and have resulted in 471 people attaining basic literacy and numeracy skills. The same curriculum is required, and the program is monitored by the government department, although promoted by a Karaboro committee (*Association pour l'Alphabétisation en Langue Kar*—the Kar literacy association) who struggle with their inability to emulate those who offer remuneration to the students.

Map 3. Burkina Faso (including Karaboro area)



Like the Konkombas, Karaboros have tended to retreat from roads and towns. A number of individuals have mentioned that they used to control the town of Banfora when it was smaller, and it is certainly true that many of the older villages now house only the grandparent and child generations. The children attend the primary schools which have been opened in the last twenty to thirty years and use the French language, and the grandparents take care of the old homesteads. The middle generation returns in the dry season for funeral celebrations, but otherwise they live in "temporary" dwellings (mud and thatch or even zinc roofs) often with quite large numbers of children. When they start to plant mango trees or

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engage in other long-term activities, it is a sign of settling down, but they always refer to their village of origin as "home" and, if initiated into Karaboro society, desire to be buried there. One Karaboro explained that his family, formerly a very large one living near Tiéfora, had migrated to a more remote area because they did not want to get tied up with all the trappings of "civilization" and the need to contribute towards schools, taxes, health services, and communal water supplies. He himself had dropped out of school because he preferred to go hunting, but he now sees this as a mistake. He has made tremendous efforts to educate himself through the Jula classes, through an award to attend a special school to help farmers like himself (*Formation des Jeunes Agriculteurs*—Young Farmers College) and through teaching in the Karaboro literacy program. He has been keen to promote the use of animal traction, since his family were among the first to introduce it.

Increasingly swidden agriculture, logging, and lack of water coupled with incursions from cattle herders is leading to population pressure on the available land. Whereas, the previous generation of youngsters moved further east, the rising generation is forced to seek its fortune in Côte d'Ivoire. This has led to a degree of interest in French, since although Jula and Mossi ghettos exist on the coffee and other plantations in the south of Côte d'Ivoire, those with no French are only able to survive with some difficulty. Evidently something needs to be done about the environmental issues before this relatively fertile part of Burkina Faso is too far degraded. It is perhaps this awareness that local resources are becoming depleted which is beginning to fuel a desire for literacy.

The Karaboros are found in a multilingual area. Another local language, Cerma, has been fairly vigorously promoted by its speakers, who have always considered themselves superior to the Karaboros (calling them their slaves). Since they have embraced economic development to a much greater extent, they are represented in the local government offices, and their literacy activities are able to be coordinated by that office and the language *sous-commission* (sub-committee) which is recognized at the national level. A related language group, the Turka, would like to be able to do the same thing, but until the last two or three years has had no one to develop the written language. Speakers of the western dialect of Karaboro are located among these peoples, and their language has been considerably modified by intermarriage. There is a significant difference in attitude between these speakers and the eastern Karaboros. Understandably they prefer to use Jula for literacy as this is a unifying language, except in the case of one village, where the people feel unfairly dominated by the Cermas and express a desire to establish their unique identity. People in the western area feel a need for outside funding to pay teachers and to build centers and provide furniture for them, since most of their crops are cash crops, and local grasses and timber for shelters are not readily available. The more independent easterners meet happily under trees for discussion and see no need for any special remuneration for the teachers, thinking rather that the students do all the work—the teachers already have literacy skills.

Towards the south of the area there has been quite an increase in the export of yams. The road has been improved and those living in the vicinity are now showing interest in primary schooling for their children. A number of villages have constructed mud brick buildings with zinc roofs and are petitioning the government for teachers. Although lively at the beginning, interest in adult literacy in the area has died, since those who wanted to have learned the skills and others feel themselves too old. This area is strongly Muslim, but there is scant interest in learning Arabic. It is those in the more remote areas who have manifested the greatest interest in recent days.

These are the ethnographic contexts in which the relevance of literacy shall be examined. What is the nature of literacy? Is it just a selection of technical skills to be acquired and used, or does it in and of itself change power relations? Does it make a difference how these skills are acquired, and are they neutral skills or can they change the world? Is there one literacy or many? In seeking to answer some of these questions, the question of whether and how much literacy is needed in rural settings will be investigated.

Oral communication and oral literature will first be examined and some answers will be found there, then literacy and written communication will be looked at more closely.

3. Orality

It is questionable whether a truly oral society exists any more, so widespread was the idea in the 1960s that literacy was essential for development. "[W]e rarely find societies that were not influenced in some way by the techniques and products of alphabetic literacy, even before the coming of Europeans" (Goody 1968:239). The above societies, while not being totally oral societies, still are quite close to that state in some areas with a certain amount of ambivalence as to whether they wish to remain that way. The question is particularly pertinent to women, who have only recently been included in the drive towards acquisition of literacy skills. In looking at the fundamental changes involved in the transition between orality and literacy, we may gain some insight into the dilemma they face. "The movement of scholars from place to place is a notable feature of even the most advanced educational systems. But when the peripatetic system is so dominant and manifests itself at elementary levels of learning, this is a sign of the restricted nature of literacy; the movement of media has not yet effectively supplemented the movement of people essential to oral transmission" (Goody 1968:208).

3.1 Characteristics of oral communication

Speech is spontaneous and ephemeral, while writing is time consuming but easily recalled. Because of its nature, oral communication is often not elaborate and may produce redundancy of expression, repetition, and use of aggregates such as "brave soldier" which help fix ideas in the memory. Practical applications predominate over abstractions. For example, tools are related to the job for which they were made, i.e., axe for wood and hoe for soil, rather than being categorized as tools, although abstractions may be found in other forms such as proverbs.

Ideas may be conservative and close to life. There is sometimes an inability to cope with syllogisms ("All dogs bark. This is a dog. Will it bark?" may produce the answer "I don't know, I haven't heard it."). This is not to say that oral societies are unable to cope with complex thought and procedures, "because the Zafimaniry (Madagascar ed.) are faced by three incompatible calendars they continually discuss ways of aligning them and for this use mathematical principles infinitely more complex than anything taught in school. Similarly, discussion of supply and demand and how to take advantage of price fluctuations according to the timing of harvests revealed rich operative ability. Again they employed good scientific hypotheses ... " (Bloch in Street 1993:99). Similarly the Konkombas are able to operate a six-day market week, and the Karaboros a five-day one alongside the national observation of a seven-day week, coordinating activities involving interaction with government officials, church or mosque, and distant markets to suit themselves, all with no apparent difficulty.

Lists and instructions are less useful than visual and aural demonstration. The very positive side of this is that communications are bound to be participatory, and there is little option about face-to-face exchanges. Controversial issues are handled in dialogue, and it is this practice which underlies essays and other written literature which presents arguments for and against a case, thus reproducing the oral decision-making process.

History is remembered in stylized poetry or special formulae, e.g., funeral rites for a dead Konkomba leader will include proclamation of battles won, and this is apt to produce selective histories and genealogies where uncomfortable facts can be forgotten (from Ong, Goody, Street, and personal experience).

"One of the features of oral communication in pre-literate societies lies in its capacity to swallow up the individual achievement and to incorporate it in a body of transmitted custom .... It is not that the creative element is absent ... it is rather that the individual signature is always getting rubbed out in the process of generative transmission" (Goody 1977:27).

3.2 Oral literature

The advent of the tape recorder has enabled man to record those things which formerly were handed on orally, so that now it is possible to speak of oral literature, i.e., a body of recorded material unrefined by writing techniques. It was always there but never so accessible as now. "The story told by the fireside does not belong to the story-teller once he has let it out of his mouth. But the story composed by his spiritual descendant, the writer in his study, 'belongs' to its composer." "Claude Levi-Strauss: 'The ancestors are sending us signals from the long history and experience of bygone days about the meaning of life, the qualities we should cultivate and the values that are important. Because they are so far away and because we are surrounded by the tumult and distractions of daily life they have to shout and repeat themselves not only in phrase after phrase but also in myth after myth, varying the form slightly now and again until the central message goes home'" (Achebe 1988:32, 93). "Most anthropologists agree that human culture is an adaptive, integrated, learned, and dynamic system" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952 quoted in Rhoades 1984). If socialization can be defined as "the process whereby individuals attain the rôle expectations, values and attitudes of society through interpersonal relationships" (Reich and Adcock 1976:43), the conversations, stories, discussions, and instructions engaged in around the family hearth are at the heart of it.

The story told under the stars belongs to the whole community as each one joins in the choruses and participates in well-known and well-loved formulae. It becomes more than a story: teaching moral values, allowing the experience of community and togetherness, and the discussion of difficult topics without overt confrontation. Modern society may replicate this around the camp fire and television could have the same potential, but the tendency is for each to retreat into isolation in his own private world unless the program(s) leads to discussion. Certain soap operas try to introduce subjects of topical interest especially in the realm of health and welfare, and these practices in turn may be replicated in the more oral community through popular theater, radio, or other communication media. Printed literature cannot produce this same effect. For example, folk stories recorded on various occasions in the village of Kajooni in Northern Ghana were transcribed into a booklet. The booklet did not sell partly because *(a)* the particular village was known to collaborate with Nanumbas at a time when there was Konkomba/Nanumba enmity and *(b)* reading and economic levels were such that only highly valued literature was bought. Regardless of these circumstances, it was also apparent that the songs and poems which were an integral part of the stories lost something in the transcription, and even reading aloud did not permit the rekindling of the atmosphere which was such a vital ingredient of the experience. "Primary orality fosters personality structures that in certain ways are more communal and externalized, and less introspective than those common among literates" (Ong 1982:69).

There are drawbacks in the oral method of transmitting social decisions, in that, without the use of the tape recorder, facts cannot be verified after the event. Any person who has witnessed an accident will understand the difficulty of getting witnesses to agree on what transpired. There is, therefore, the tendency to think that decisions about ownership or rights of use should be preserved in writing. But, where few can read and write, this accuracy must be called in question. Walter Ong writes "of the 164 now extant charters of Edward the Confessor, 44 are certainly forged, only 64 certainly authentic, and the rest uncertainly one or the other" (Ong 1982:98). At the time, many preferred seals and the testimony of a group of trusted men to written contracts. This same problem is present today when contracts about affairs such as payment for cotton grown or repayment of loans for equipment like ploughs are worked out with local cooperatives—the unscrupulous dealer is able to arrange things as he or she wishes, and even written records are unable to right some injustices. Individuals involved in such transactions need to find ways of recording them, and the surest way to avoid being cheated is to develop the ability to decode the record. Equivalents of the tithe sticks found in medieval Britian do not appear to exist in the African cultures mentioned, so probably paper and written records are the most practical, with as many witnesses as possible standing by, especially those who can read the records.

There are also drawbacks in the oral method of transmitting new information and remembering it. While it may be advantageous to remember only the palatable facts of history, it is distinctly more problematic when details of a new technology need to be recalled. Thus, newly literate Karaboros found it helpful to record on paper the quantities of sheanut butter, water, and caustic soda required in soap making (a new technology), so that these things would not be forgotten during the season when the ingredients were less readily available.

"Oral cultures today value their oral traditions and agonize over the loss of these traditions, but I have never encountered or heard of an oral culture that does not want to achieve literacy as soon as possible" (Ong 1982:175). The perspective of a literacy worker is apt to be rather different from this; certainly traditions are valued and this may be one of the factors which motivate learning, but frequently the time and effort involved discourage, and a large part of the energy of the worker must be given to stimulating interest. However, some literacy classes perform the unifying and socializing function mentioned in relation to the story telling, and where this is the case they may be highly valued. In that context, they may be a powerful vehicle for rural social development.

4. Literacy

Literacy is seen as one type of communicative practice (Grillo 1989:8)

It is important to realize that literacy has different meanings for different people. Literacy can be thought of in terms of the processes involved in encoding the spoken word so that it may be put on paper and decoding the symbols already written. This presents it as an autonomous cognitive skill to be acquired by learning certain techniques.

Another way of thinking of literacy is in terms of the mystique of the written word. To those unable to decode the symbols, they seem to have a magical quality enabling man to communicate over time and space and so get in touch with the supernatural. This has given rise to charms like phylacteries and amulets — small boxes or pouches containing the written word, often worn around the neck or attached to clothing or other parts of the body — and practices such as divining with pencil and exercise book and "drinking of the word" (actually the ink) (from Goody 1968).

Somewhere between these extremes comes memorization and rote learning. The British child "reads" nursery rhymes and other books before reaching school age, and, in the same way, adults in some cultures may lead worship by "reading" texts which they recognize from their layout. Often the language is not fully understood, and the focus is more on the declamatory nature of the reading than its content. Usually there is a teacher who can interpret the meaning, but these teachers are rarely to be found in remote locations.

A key question in considering what we mean by literacy is the question of its aim. "There is not one literacy but many because of the varied forms of literacy and the different purposes they serve in a society" (Herbert 1990:11). What may be the aims?

> Literacy is a way of remembering, recording, representing reality, communicating across space and time .... Reasons why adults might want to learn include: To acquire status/be respected by other people; To learn new skills; To take positions of responsibility in organisations; To keep basic accounts; To start up a small business; To read and write personal or official letters; To help children with their homework; To have access to information e.g., about agriculture or health; To read instructions of medicines/prescriptions; To read directions, signposts and posters; To understand labels on fertilisers/pesticides; To keep records eg of children's vaccinations; To avoid being cheated; To read newspapers; To get a new job; To read religious texts; To read for diversion/entertainment (Archer and Cottingham 1996:9).

An approach to literacy study spearheaded by Brian Street during the 1980s draws attention to the ideological nature of literacy, saying that it cannot be neutral. "Literacy practices are aspects not only of 'culture' but also of power structures. The very emphasis on the 'neutrality' and 'autonomy' of literacy by many writers is ideological in the sense of disguising this power dimension" (Street 1995:161). "Defining literacy involves making explicit a set of related ideological positions, not just on literacy itself, but on where literacy fits in social life as well as its role in constructing social life" (Baynham 1995:37). Much of the focus on ideology derives from the psychosocial approach of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian adult educationalist, who was very active in the 1970s seeking the liberation of oppressed people through education and whose ideas still permeate the literature. "Freire and others have suggested that most learning is accomplished by critically analysing experience. They have spoken of a learning cycle starting with experience, proceeding through reflection and leading to action, which in its turn becomes the concrete experience for more reflection and thus the next stage of the cycle" (Rogers 1992:13). In the group context, the critical reflection upon experience will involve everyone. "Effectively it is a discussion, but not just any discussion: rather it is a discussion where people, in a trusting environment, reach beyond everyday life, open up, and come face to face with new understanding and awareness" (Archer and Cottingham 1996:11). Freire called this process *conscientization*.

"Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy" (Baynham 1995:9). As seen at the beginning of this section, literacy involves communication; the next topic is the characteristics of written communication as opposed to those of oral communication which have already been studied.

4.1 Characteristics of written communication

> The written word does not replace speech any more than speech replaces gesture (Goody 1977:15).

Speech, unless it be by telephone or radio, requires face-to-face association, whereas the written word allows communication over distance and time and thus the maintenance of secondary relationships and the development of bureaucracy (from Goody 1977). Remembered truth is flexible, so people generally see written records as more reliable, although as seen in section 2.2, this may sometimes be a mistake. The development of e-mail and faxes adds immediacy to written communication.

In contrast to oral communication, written communication is said to be abstract, analytical, distancing, objective, and separative. Writing is "isolating, dissecting, analytical, associated with other senses in a way that sound is not and, crucially, appears able to 'fix' impressions in a way that sound does not" (Street 1984, 1993 summarizing the "great divide" between orality and literacy as expounded by Ong and others). In short, it lacks spontaneity but is capable of exactitude.

Part of the task of committing a language to writing is the selection of the most suitable dialect, since not all dialects can be written, and some are more central, prestigious, or easily understood than others. Over a period of time the orthography becomes standardized and communication between the extreme ends of the dialect spectrum becomes more possible. Writing can therefore have a unifying effect on a language. This proved to be so with the Konkomba language which has some quite widely diverging dialects but uses a common literature.

People have been writing in English so long that it has been said that "the grapholect bears the marks of the millions of minds which have used it to share their consciousnesses with one another" (Ong 1984:107). This meant that with the coming of the printing press "the pursuit of truth ... became the discovery of new knowledge rather than the constant effort to recover and preserve traditional knowledge" (Barton 1994, quoted in Archer and Cottingham 1996:14). This newness may disable the oral poet or musician who often "remembers songs sung" and may lack real originality. Real creative talent is rare.

Developing literature in a previously unwritten mother tongue can prove quite difficult at first. Initial writers' workshops in both Konkomba and Karaboro appeared to produce some quite fluent stories, wise counsel, and interesting thoughts—ideal one would think for the production of booklets and newspapers. The truth was that the would-be writers had formulated the ideas in their minds and had spent some time writing. But when they were asked to present their stories, they were unable to read back what they had written, so the presentation was actually oral. Only a few writers had adequate transcriptions of their ideas, but in some cases it was possible to reconstruct what had been written. In other instances, it was possible to work from dictation, and in the case of one or two school-leavers, it was possible to use the manuscripts as they stood. Possibly the main problem was speed. As relatively new literates, they may not have developed the techniques of writing sufficiently to allow for extended writing. The most successful authors were a Karaboro partnership. Their booklet, dealing with the problem of the exodus of youth to Côte d'Ivoire, proved to be extremely popular, and their next title on animal traction is eagerly awaited. Although some literature written by school-leavers was published, it never sold well, partly because their ideas were formulated in another language and partly because they had not yet gained the status of respected members of the community.

It may be interesting to note that some people never seem to acquire the ability to express themselves on paper. A case in point was a key Konkomba supervisor, who had never been to school, taught many to read, and wrote well from dictation or copying, but he never managed an original manuscript of any kind, even a letter. In recent women's classes, the women have focused on writing their names in the first few lessons and sewing them onto book bags. They have proved to have much more confidence in trying to write in subsequent lessons and have reached an acceptable standard of copying.

If these societies are to avail themselves of the possibilities presented by literacy, a methodology of teaching-learning will be needed.

4.2 Literacy teaching-learning methodologies

> Adult education has a concern for methodology, for developing understanding and good practice of the most effective teaching-learning approaches for adults (Rogers 1992:70).

In section 1.2 above, Alan Rogers' model of routes to developmental change were looked at (Rogers 1992:118–30). All literacy programs are in danger of bypassing certain steps. Here some of the methodologies and their dangers will be examined briefly.

4.2.1 The bureaucratic route. This approach sees reading and possibly writing, discussion, and numeracy as crucially important and sets out to impose it on the local population, omitting the stages of awareness creation and knowledge/skills development and proceeding straight from the existing state to action. The pseudo-Freirean primers prepared for the Karaboro program fall into this trap—each lesson has a development discussion topic, and an accompanying booklet for the teacher to aid him in leading the discussion. It has been acknowledged in seminars at the national level that this discussion usually fails—it often seems irrelevant to the participants, and the one leading the discussion is often ill-equipped to handle it. It seems that all three programs are now between the stage of developing a solid base of knowledge, skills,

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and understanding and the final stage of engaging it in a program of social action. Each of the programs has engaged in various types of action apart from the classes, and it is to be hoped they will continue along this road

4.2.2 The technocratic route. This includes some limited elements of education and training but omits the awareness creation stage. In each of the above programs, the primers were prepared in consultation with mother tongue speakers at a central location and considerably altered in consultation with participants after trial and testing in a number of different settings, so they did not fall into the trap of centralization. The weakness more often arose from the attempt to use "insiders" from the community to lead the program and an inadequate awareness on the part of those making the personel choices of the quality of persons needed. This resulted in a great deal of unevenness in capability, and while all the training was an attempt to alleviate this problem, sometimes the learning resembled more a pooling of ignorance than a pooling of knowledge and skills and developing awareness. Participants appeared to think there was only one right way to teach, i.e., the teacher in control telling the audience what to think.

4.2.3 The direct action route. This starts with arousing awareness but omits the education and training stage. It seems that this is the weakness most likely to befall programs modelled on the Freirean approach. Freire's statement (1972:7) that "refusal to take sides in the conflict of the powerful with the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" is a very dangerous one for an outsider to make. Only the powerless should decide whether battle lines should be drawn up or whether powerlessness is preferable to bloodshed. "Revolutions ... disrupt and even deny the process of development; the desired change does not emerge out of the existing state" (Rogers 1992:122). Education and training should not be omitted. It is not literacy per se which empowers—"if 100% literacy was achieved in a country like Cuba, for example, would democracy be advanced one bit?" (Rogers 1990:34).

4.2.4 REFLECT. One of the new literacies arising out of the modern practice of PRA or RRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal or Rapid [now called Relaxed] Rural Appraisal) is the REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community

Techniques) method developed by ActionAid. Programs were initiated in Bangladesh, Uganda, and El Salvador in 1992 using mapping and matrices, calendars, surveys, and other devices to involve villagers of all levels in looking at their development needs. "If people have no previous experience of literacy then REFLECT can be used at the very basic level to introduce the written word for the first time .... The REFLECT approach may also be adapted for use as a post-literacy course, after a basic adult literacy course ... " (Archer and Cottingham 1996:44). An international REFLECT workshop took place in Uganda in 1995, and it will be interesting to see the results of this initiative. "People realise themselves in social transformation and economic productivity not through better knowledge, but through more confidence. When people confront a situation where they need specific knowledge they acquire it" (Fuglesang, quoted in Archer and Cottingham 1996:36). The ability to hear what the participants are really saying and what they really want seems to be of the utmost importance in development work, and it is possible that this method may permit illiterates to be heard in the literate world. One of the functions of a mother tongue literacy program is to develop that confidence so that the contribution the speakers can offer is made known to wider society.

As a vehicle for teaching people to read and write in nonwritten languages, however, it would appear to present a number of problems. For example, constant syllable or word building without using the built words in a wider context can go on indefinitely without resulting in reading.

The complexity of writing a language for the first time is dismissed in a few sentences which do not take account of the difficulties.

> Writing a language for the first time is not as complex as it may seem .... [I]dentify mother tongue speakers of the language who are literate in another language .... Ask them separately to write out a few pages of text in their mother tongue .... Ask them to write the words in the way that appears most simple to them and most phonetically accurate, using whatever script is most commonly used in the area .... Then collect these papers together and review them to see what different means are used to spell different sounds.

> An initial agreement on spelling conventions can be reached with remarkable ease! (Archer and Cottingham 1996:49).

This is fairly true for a language such as Ngbaka with simple consonant-vowel syllables and non-significant tone, but some personal pronouns in Toussian (Burkina Faso) are only distinguished by tone, and nasalization and vowel length in Karaboro are interrelated in such a way as to make poorly transcribed text very difficult to read (*ka* = go, *kã* = pierce, *kaa* = chew, *kãã* = teeth, and *kan* and *kaan* also exist). Discerning these things may not take long, but agreeing on a consistent orthography so that written material may be read back may take years.

Estimates of the ability of the facilitators to cope with such an open-ended program may be rather over-optimistic, especially in the more remote areas. Finding someone who is local to the community, of a similar socio-economic level with respect for participants, has been chosen after community discussion, is committed, and has communication skills may be very difficult if he or she is also required to have basic literacy skills and willingness to learn. This is precisely the problem mentioned in section 4.2.2 above. Training would be problematic because of distances, and whether it would actually result in any useful change in any of the villages other than entertainment for them may be questionable. Most people seem to regard learning as painful, so the entertainment might be a good thing in itself. Many also seem to find playing with beans and drawing childish "drawing humbles the facilitators as usually they can't get things to look right" (Archer and Cottingham 1992:22), and it is possible that this is the most valuable part of the whole exercise.

4.3 Effects of literacy

Literature is part of the literate society. Attitudes to what has been written, uses people make of different types of text, and the practical results of the introduction of literacy and numeracy shall be examined in the sections below.

4.3.1 Attitudes to text. Hoggart, a working-class Englishman reflecting on changes in his society, feels that "the growth of literacy, far from leading to a deepening of response to literature and that complexity in life with which worthwhile literature is concerned, has led to a debasement of feeling, a narrowing of response, a weakening of traditions that were once healthy and strong" (Street 1995:57). He is concerned by the loss of community in his neighborhood, brought about by the isolating nature of literacy. In contrast Chinua Achebe, from a Nigerian background, sees it in a much more positive light. "When I read, somebody is talking to me; and when I write, I am talking to somebody. It is a personal, even intimate relationship" (Achebe n.d.:1).

Chinua Achebe has highlighted the importance of community and history to his people:

A letter came to me the other day
I said to Mosisi: "Read my letter for me."...
"This is what the letter has asked me to tell you:
He that has a brother must hold him to his heart,
For a kinsman cannot be bought in the market,
Neither is a brother bought with money."...

Is everyone here?...
Are you all here?...

The letter said
That money cannot buy a kinsman,...
That he who has brothers
Has more than riches can buy. (Achebe 1960:117)

"I believe that a spiritual bond exists between the true artist and his community .... For the African writer a complex situation is further confounded by mass illiteracy among his people and his use of European language. On the face of it, he should be the loneliest of voices without any sense of community. Should be, but is he? ... I think we find a consuming concern with community" (Achebe n.d.:3). "I would be quite satisfied if my novels ... did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on

God's behalf delivered them" (Achebe 1988:30). Mother tongue literacy may only be a first step towards communicating with the outside world, but there is a need for outsiders to hear what Konkombas, Ngbakas, Karaboros, and others have to say, and a need for their own people to recognize that what they have to say may be just as valid as the ideas of outsiders. "Literacy is about having an outlet for your own view of the world" (McCaffery in Hamilton and Barton 1989:35).

4.3.2 Uses of different types of text. People do not always want face-to-face communication. Letters are a valuable way of keeping in touch with distant relatives and friends, especially in societies where migration is common, but in many parts of Africa they also have other meanings. Writing is respectful, so a person wishing to solicit help, particularly financial help, will often write a letter even if he or she delivers the letter in person. Writing is also formal and needs to be used carefully in the formal sector, since a letter of convocation should be obeyed and, although quite stinging rebukes may be delivered in person without offence, a mild complaint in writing may have serious consequences. The form in which the letter is written may also have significance, e.g., the use of a large envelope shows greater respect than a folded sheet, and re-using envelopes is usually not done. Literate persons have access to private communication by letter, and it may be that some use letters to express their feelings (Besnier in Street 1984:62 68).

Books may be revered or used as cigarette papers, wrapping papers, or toilet paper, but they are widely bought by societies without much of a tradition of literacy. There is a widespread feeling that if the book says something, it must be true, even if the author is a local person known to be fallible. "What was taught in the school emanated from such prestigious sources that it could not and should not be concerned with the practical or with the empirical world. Above all it should be, like the elders and their knowledge, beyond dialectic" (Bloch in Street 1993:101). It is possible that writing may actually enhance the reputation of the local author.

Attitudes to the Holy Books, such as the Koran, Bible, and Veda, vary between reverence for something semimagical or charmed and respect for wise teaching; it is only those of the "educated" West who lack reverence. There is a significant difference between rote-learning as a starting point for discussion, moral instruction, and scientific teaching and reading with understanding in the mother tongue. The one leads to dependence on the teacher while the other tends towards individual autonomy.

4.3.3 Practical results. "Women's literacy has been linked to lower child mortality rates and healthier children; higher enrolment in school; more efficient farming; more advanced savings and credit activities, and to lower population growth rates" (Archer and Cottingham 1996:16). The reason why this has not been mentioned earlier in the discussion is that it is not entirely clear whether literacy is the cause or the effect of the improvements. Are those with healthier lifestyles more able to take the time to become literate, or is it those who become literate who develop healthier lifestyles? It may be only a simple matter of association of factors. "Literacy is necessary, but certainly not sufficient to explain key developments in the organization of knowledge and social transformations" (Baynham 1995:48).

Guy Belloncle and his colleagues have been keen to promote the idea that trade and cooperatives form the motivation for literacy (1982 and lectures in Ouagadougou). Certainly, there was always a strong link between Islam and trade, since it was only as Muslims that long-distance traders were able to travel freely. "All these movements of Muslim pilgrims, of royal raiders, and of long-distance traders meant that even the simplest societies in northern Ghana could not be unaware of the existence of writing, and even of literate (or partially literate) societies. The attitudes of the stateless communities towards these societies were often extremely hostile, for it was their chiefs and traders who raided them for slaves or sought to dominate them politically. In return they raided the caravans that passed their villages, paying off their debt in murder and pillage" (Goody 1968:201). Not much has changed; as mentioned in section 2.1 above, Gonjas, Nanumbas, and Dagombas still dominate the Konkombas. The difference is that, as the Konkomba Youth Association tried to unite and to arrange for the settlement of internal marriage disputes themselves by the appointment of an elder, so the Nanumbas felt threatened and deported the elder. Subsequent victory over the Nanumbas coinciding with the arrival of the New Testament, and widespread literacy efforts gave Konkombas the confidence to demand access to the House of Chiefs, thus precipitating further conflict with Dagombas. "[T]he value of writing as a means of communication with the supernatural powers appears to have been recognized throughout northern Ghana, in acephalous communities as well as states, among pagans as well as Muslims, among the non-literate as well as the partially literate" (Goody 1968:202).

"The region of Dyula settlement is characterized by a marked opposition between town and countryside. A Dyula town will have a number of associated Dyula villages, urban outposts spaced out along the trade paths connecting one major centre with another. In general, however, the countryside is dominated by groups tribes . having little cultural community with the Dyula" (Wilks in Goody 1968:163). Not much has changed here either. The Karaboros still have little to do with the Julas, who, for the most part have settled along the Gaoua-Banfora road. "The Dyula accept the ideal of universal literacy ... as a highly desirable one .... Basic economic growth ... appears to create a steady rise in demand for men of learning. For example, a community previously existing at a subsistence level, but producing for the first time marketable surpluses, may decide to invite a *karamoko* to join it, and a delegation is sent to the nearest town to request the imam to find a suitable person. This process is important not only for the growth of literacy, but also for the spread of Islam" (Goody 1968:188, 9). On the whole the Karaboro literacy program has been accepted by the Jula community, although there has been a desire by some to dominate, possibly because the authority of local Muslim teachers *(karamokos)* was felt to be threatened.

The author's experience of the Ngbakas was of an absence of real markets except in really big centers like Gemena. Since the literacy program was run through the churches, which teach that it is more blessed to give than to receive, this was reflected in the organization of training courses, i.e., villages took it in turns to host the events, and participants brought their own food supplies. Thus the only monetary exchange was for the books. In fact, because of the changing exchange rates, sales of books were never able to pay for the production of new books. In effect, the books were a gift from outside, while the money obtained from them was given to the supervisors to facilitate their travelling and help to reimburse them for the time away from their fields.

All of the above tends to suggest that literacy is a good thing, and yet the truth may be different. Many children from peasant families are sent to school so that they may be delivered from the drudgery of heavy farm labor. A few manage to surmount the formidable barriers of language and culture and find jobs in the cities or even in extension work, but the majority drop out or are selectively removed. Consequently, they find themselves without sufficient education to obtain paid employment, yet they are too soft to return to the labor they abandoned. If literacy is not practical to the peasants where they are, it is no wonder that they question the need for it.

4.4 Implications

"The recognition that literacy is ideological, and therefore involves imparting a point of view as well as simply teaching a technical skill, does not mean that that point of view has to be imposed in authoritarian or insensitive ways. The local language, culture and thinking has to be taken into account and not simply written off" (Street 1984:212). Indeed, if the local language, culture, and thinking are written off, there is not much hope of the acceptance of the ideology unless it be by coercion or force, and it is known that the man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still. "Ideology is the site of tension between authority and power on the one hand and resistance and creativity on the other" (Tannen 1982).

Is literacy a focus for domination or a means of discovering a culture? The function of schools in society is often social control. "The acquisition of literacy is, in fact, a socialisation process rather than a technical process" (Street 1984:180). "The workers had to be convinced that it was in their interests to learn the kind of literacy on offer, in the kinds of institutions in which it was taught, but had to be restrained from taking control of it for themselves or developing their own alternative conceptions of it" (Street 1984:105). "The structures of demands, needs and uses for literacy, and thereby the definitions of it vary according to context" (Street 1984:109).

Anyone who has conducted a literacy campaign will realize that, while it may start in ideology, the sheer hard work involved in acquiring the technical skills is likely either to distract the participants from the ideological goal or to lead to the sort of discouragement which abandons the skills in favor of immediate revolution or of a quiet life untroubled by literacy programs. Change inevitably comes, but the type of change depends as much upon the methodology used as upon the ideology behind it.

The ideology behind the literacy programs among Konkombas, Ngbakas, and Karaboros was the desire to see the Bible accessible to them in their own language. For the most part this has been achieved. In the case of the Konkombas, it could be said that this fueled the already existing conflict between them and the Gonjas, Nanumbas, and Dagombas. Reference to David Tait's work will confirm that unequal power relations between these peoples and the Konkombas date back to the early sixteenth century. The Konkomba Youth Association was the political organ trying to deal with this problem, and its origins and those of the literacy program were entirely separate. Widespread acquisition of the technical skills of reading and writing, coupled with some economic and social development, undoubtedly strengthened the powerbase of the Konkombas, thereby intensifying the conflict. However, that same opportunity was deliberately offered to Nanumbas, Gonjas, and Dagombas at the same time, and it was not so widely adopted.

As stated previously, the Ngbaka people were already Christianized before the start of the mother tongue literacy program, and its effects have mainly been the development of a greater depth of understanding of their faith and a change in some habits. Arising from the program there have been various economic development initiatives, such as pig farming and the introduction of beans, but the unstable economic situation in the country as a whole has meant that these initiatives have not led to total self-reliance.

The migration of Karaboros leads to the adoption of Islam or Christianity for the purposes of support in times of need; this is usually verbalized as a need to have people willing to bury the migrant in the event of his death. "What is clearly important for migrants and sojourners is that they have access to a supportive (possibly co-national) group" (Furnham and Bochner 1986:185).

This has not had a vast impact on the literacy program; on the whole people are either interested in learning or they are not. Muslims to the south have mostly lost interest in adult literacy, but this would seem to have as much to do with their emphasis on building new primary schools as it does with their religion. Development initiatives arising from the program at the moment are such things as animal traction, work on wells, soap making, and production of books in their own press. These peoples now have the choice as to whether they want to embrace Biblical teaching or not.

"I tell you all this so that you may know what it was in those days to become a Christian. I left my father's house, and he placed a curse on me. I went through fire to become a Christian. Because I suffered I understand Christianity more than you will ever do" (Achebe 1960:125).

4.5 Numeracy

We have already seen in section 2.3, that numeracy is a required part of the curriculum for adult literacy in Burkina Faso, and in section 4, that, at least for Mike Baynham, literacy incorporates numeracy. Also, the emphases on cooperatives and trade, the ideologies of Guy Belloncle and of the Muslims, presupposes that a society embracing literacy also embraces numeracy, although this is not always the case. For all these reasons, numeracy will be addressed before moving on to the final conclusions.

"Counting cows is different from counting cowries" (Goody 1977:13), because for a brideprice among the LoDagaa, it may be necessary to count 20,000 cowries, and it is done by amassing piles. First of all, groups of five cowries are assembled with groups of twos and threes. Four of these piles make twenty, and five piles of twenty make a hundred. In this way two hundred piles of one hundred cowries can quickly be assembled, i.e., 20,000. "The LoDagaa have an 'abstract' numerical system that applies as well to cowries as to cows. But the ways in which they use these concepts are embedded in daily living" (Goody 1977:13).

Similarly, Karaboros have their own conception of numeracy and use a base of twenty rather than ten. Thus 100 is *gbeebua* (20 x 5), and 135 is *gbeebua sinsye bua* (20 x 6 + 10 + 5). This leads to complications when trying to express figures on paper, although in the oral context counting is done in much the same way as for the LoDagaa, except that the big piles are of 200 rather than 100. In the modern day, money complicates things still further and must be done with the coins or notes in hand. This is because the smallest coin denomination is five francs, and is logically called *nen* (one). Thus twenty francs is *rishar* (four), and 100 is *gbey* (twenty). Fortunately, the 1,000 franc note equates to *krue* (200), and so counting of notes can be relatively easy if 500f notes are counted in twos. Most elders require at least two witnesses when handling large sums, and transactions need to be very open. As yet there seems to be no easy solution to the puzzle of how to teach the recording of financial transactions. The neighboring Ciramba, who have a similar problem, have made progress in teaching their people to record numbers in a way unique to themselves. In that way they are easily able to read them in their own language, but outsiders wishing to interact with them are faced with the same conundrum in reverse, and the Ciramba are unable to read their own numbers in French with any fluency. The young Karaboro men who wish to migrate seem to cope well with learning the numbers in French and recording them in the usual way; this is the classic school method, which has rendered many Karaboros very slow in understanding arithmetic. Solutions are still being sought, especially since the work of Guy Belloncle, who encourages a literacy based on bookkeeping, is widely respected in the country. "My father ... never destroyed any paper" (Achebe 1988:24). Belloncle urges the illiterate man to examine his pockets and see how many pieces of paper he can find that he does not understand and thus to develop a desire for more knowledge. The average Karaboro does not have many pockets!

Money is a central issue in economic development, and it seems to pose a special problem for the Ngbakas and the Karaboros for different reasons. For the Ngbakas, it is simply a matter that exchange rates fluctuate widely and frequently, and at times there have been two Zairean currencies circulating in addition to the francs of the Central African Republic. As a result, for most practical purposes many people have returned to barter; it was surprising to find the youth of Britain also engaged in the same sort of barter for services, at least in the Glastonbury area.

"You might deduce that my ancestors approved of ostentation .... [I]n their day wealth could only be acquired honestly, by the sweat of man's brow .... [G]iven their extreme republican and egalitarian world-view it made good sense for the community to encourage a man acquiring more wealth than his neighbours to squander it and thus convert a threat of material power into harmless honorific distinction, while his accumulated riches flowed back into the commonwealth" (Achebe 1988:21). Savings are a part of Karaboro life, but there is a preference for real wealth like animals rather than money, which, as often as not, is concealed in a sacrificial pot and may go mouldy while the elderly guardian refuses to reveal its whereabouts. Distrust of banks is endemic. Final funeral rites for well-known, initiated Karaboro elders may be extremely extravagant—a recent one in Tiéfora resulted in the slaughter of eight cows—and in this way honor is maintained while power is moderated.

5. Conclusion

This article started with the question of whether literacy has any role to play in rural development, and this is the issue that has to be addressed in conclusion. But first, literacy in the mother tongue as compared to other literacies shall be examined.

5.1 What is the distinctive role of mother tongue literacy?

> [F]luent literacy among Muslims is a rare accomplishment .... A pupil is primarily engaged in learning not the technique of reading and writing but the Holy Book itself; thus he has to learn not only the word of God but the language of God. For anyone other than an Arabic speaker, the learning of the literate skills is overlaid, indeed confounded, with the learning of another language (Goody 1968:222).

Ghanaians, under the power of the British, had to use English as their national language; similarly Burkinabe and Zairois had to use French. Many may regret the colonial past, particularly as school children struggle to express themselves in a language not their own. It is no wonder that many reach quite advanced stages of education before realizing that they can and indeed should think for themselves. "[W]e cannot justify imposing literacy in a non-written language if participants are not interested and if their desire is to access the language of power. At the end of the day participants must be given the choice of which language they learn in .... Although teaching in the mother tongue can seem to be marginalising people, in practice it can also be providing strong bridges to other languages" (Archer and Cottingham 1996:49).

The function of mother tongue literacy is to make known to the wider world the contribution of the minority, i.e., to make the symbols of the minority accessible to the outside world. Konkomba, Ngbaka, and Karaboro may never be world class languages, but if mother tongue literacy can enable their voice to be heard, and they can contribute their unique ideas to the wider world, it will have achieved its object. For many years they have been the recipients of ideas from outside; perhaps now they can have their turn.

> It cannot be unimportant to the intellectual life of any society that some of its most highly valued members are absorbing religious ideas, practising divinatory systems, and acquiring mental skills that have emerged in quite another context, at quite another time. These ideas always undergo a process of reinterpretation at the local level, but they can never be wholly absorbed into the particular culture to which they have been transmitted without at the same time modifying that culture in certain major respects. Moreover, ideas communicated by literary means can never be totally absorbed like those passed on orally, because the book always remains there as a check upon the transformations that have taken place. The check is generally ignored, but at critical moments the primordial version can always make an uncomfortable reappearance (Goody 1968:216).

Often literacy rates in a particular language reflect transfer of skills from one language to another. So, in the village of Sidéradougou, Burkina Faso, many attending the literacy classes in Jula would be people already able to read a little in Mooré or French. Not surprisingly, progress in learning would be quite rapid, and the result would be the maintaining of literacy skills in a more or less nonliterate environment. Similarly, many of the early learners in Karaboro were those who had already had some experience in Jula. But, having learnt, then what?

One of the reasons for writing the locally authored booklet "*Wlāhāndi Kaplā;n* ..." was an attempt to stop the fragmenting of Karaboro society as the young migrate searching after work. The booklet is written in dialogue form, and the essence of it is that if Wlāhāndi does not encourage his sons to stay by helping them get bullocks, then they will go south for money (Sory and Sory 1993). This aspect of life and the subsequent loss of the distinctive Karaboro expressions causes great grief as families gather for dry-season funerals and note absences. "Children left their old parents at home and scattered in all directions in search of money. It was hard on an old woman with eight children. It was like having a river and yet washing one's hands with spittle" (Achebe 1960:122).

An effect of mother tongue literacy campaigns is the drawing together of local inhabitants to discuss their situation. Whether or not they succeed in learning the cognitive skills necessary for reading and writing depends very much on what motivates them and the degree of persuasion or coercion to which they are subjected. "It is increasingly uncommon to find communities with no interest in literacy. Most people do see some value and would like to learn something (if only to sign their name) ... " (Archer and Cottingham 1996:42).

"PRA [Participatory Rural Appraisal] practitioners start from the recognition that poor communities have a wealth of local technical and social knowledge. They have survived often through centuries in difficult environments with limited resources. What is needed are techniques to enable non-literate people to articulate their knowledge as building on this knowledge and the reality of the poor must be the starting point of any effective development program" (Archer and Cottingham 1996:13). In fact, PRA practitioners are probably not doing much more than sitting in on the already existing village discussion which takes place over the groundnut shelling or the washing at river or well.

5.2 Is mother tongue literacy a help or a hindrance to development?

If all the possibilities for social change are able to be presented in the mother tongue, it opens up opportunities for everyone to participate in the innovations. The very process of translating, adapting, or interpreting development literature leads to a depth of knowledge and understanding of its content. Thus we can see that between 1988 and 1990, the Konkombas deemed the following subjects to be important to them, i.e., calendars, elephants, Ghana, birth control, cultural practices, English, guinea worm, health, fighting ignorance, painful ignorance, proverbs, jokes, help, and folk stories (book titles in Cairns 1991 Schedule M). On the other hand, it will never be possible for all the possibilities to be presented, so together leaders and outsiders will have to try to find the most applicable information, and it will not be possible to please all of the people all of the time! It is important to remember that, just as in daily life people need to be treated as individuals, so the same process of development cannot be used for all societies, and literacy personel are going to get it wrong as they learn together with the community.

"Learning a language to the level where discussion of such matters can take place requires more time than most change agents and their agencies choose to take .... Development agencies and agents must plan and intervene in the long term if ITK (Indigenous Technical Knowledge) and its underlying participatory approach are to bear fruit; otherwise the signal is given to the local people that others' constraints—generally time and money—are more important than their needs" (Robinson 1991:15). "If we knew how to measure the value of ideas, of relationships, of growth, we could answer (the) question (of evaluating the results of our investment). But we can't, at least not in the most important ways" (George Huttar 1995 personal communication).

The above literacy programs have served the function of enabling the people to organize themselves to use available resources to support their own well-being (see Charlick in section 5.1). They have made a start in satisfying 1) their needs to be able to communicate with the wider world (see Seers and Goussault in section 5.1) and 2) their desires for information on various topics (see Cairns in section 5.2). Perhaps the area in which they have seen least progress is that of managing the market, but then they are farmers rather than traders and most wish to remain as such. Women attending literacy classes in the Gambia say that they are doing it so as to help them manage their income-generating projects. The interest shown by Konkombas, Ngbakas, and Karaboros in different projects of this type indicates that they also are motivated by this aim.

In what ways has mother tongue literacy hindered development? The devastating effects of ethnic conflict are obviously anti-developmental, and yet it cannot be said that the reasons for the conflict should be laid at the door of mother tongue literacy. Rather, as literacy supervisors are able to get back to work in building the capacity of the people, such conflict may become more of a rarity. Konkombas now have recognition in the House of Chiefs and may even have been granted representation.

As yet, the part that women have played in these programs has been small. In the coming years it may be good for them to take center stage, but, again, this will need to be done in the context of the societies, as disturbing the balance of gender shakes the world and is something that needs to be negotiated between man and wife, males and females. "Project evaluations usually suggest that success is more likely if women's basic motivations and needs are taken into account ..., but ... [t]he women may have difficulty in the overall perception of problems which require structural changes, and in distinguishing long-term objectives" (Ballara 1991:50).

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When Students Don't Learn, When Schools Don't Teach: Minority School Failure in Perspective

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1. Introduction

We live in an increasingly multicultural world. Ethnic communities which were formerly separated by geographic, cultural, and political boundaries now find themselves joined and intermingled with many other languages, cultures, and societies. A number of global trends have facilitated this process. Newly-drawn political boundaries join together, often somewhat arbitrarily, numbers of ethnic groups into modern "nation-states." Under the banner of unity and nationalism, ethnic minority groups[1] are often asked to lay down part of their former self-identities and join together under a new identity. That identity is most often shaped and defined by another group, that of the ethnic majority. In addition, modern communications and transportation technology have enabled increasingly greater numbers of people to immigrate to new places in search of a better life, greater freedom, or an escape from troubles of the past.

Another trend has occurred almost simultaneously, that of mass schooling. Since the 1950s there has been a growing pressure on governments to provide universal schooling for all children

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[1] In this paper, the author uses the terms "minorities" and "ethnic minorities" interchangeably to indicate an ethnic and linguistic group which is in a position of economic, social and political subordination to another group. These groups are usually minorities in a numerical sense as well (but not necessarily so).

(Ramirez and Boli-Bennett 1982:21). Governments, many of them new and financially strapped, struggle to meet this giant task. Complicating the situation is the aforementioned multiplicity of ethnic groups now thrown together into one common national educational system. Throughout the world, ethnic minority children from diverse groups are schooled in systems which have been shaped and defined by and for the majority culture. And increasingly, if one examines countries as diverse as Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) and the United States, Mongolia and Great Britain, the outcome is one of failure for ethnic minority children.

The purpose of this article is to explore possible reasons for this failure based on the "secondary cultural differences" theory of John Ogbu, as well as others who build on his theories in profitable ways.

Over the years, there have been a number of explanations to account for the trend of ethnic minority school failure (Jacob and Jordan 1993:4–8). Many of them have placed the burden of the problem on the minorities themselves. Some of these include the following.

1. GENETIC EXPLANATION: Researchers in the 1950s concluded that ethnic minorities were simply less intelligent due to genetic or inborn characteristics. This view has now been widely discredited.
2. CULTURAL DEFICIT EXPLANATION: The 1960s gave rise to the idea that ethnic minorities, because they often come from low socioeconomic status levels, are culturally deprived. That is, their impoverished environment is deficient in providing the linguistic, social, and psychological experiences, values, and attitudes needed to be successful in school. Traces of this explanation can still be found in current sociological theories related to school achievement.
3. STATUS ATTAINMENT APPROACH: This approach, based on empirical statistical studies, concludes that school achievement is tied directly to family background. This theory has been widely accused of being inadequate, i.e., too simplistic and narrow.

4. SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY: The 1970s brought about the first theory which acknowledged that at least some of the blame for minority school failure may rest with society itself. The social reproduction theory, which has been very influential, claims that schools are designed to reproduce existing status levels. Thus ethnic minority groups, which often occupy low status levels, are denied success in schooling in order to keep them at that low level, thus maintaining a position of power for the dominant sector.
5. CULTURAL DIFFERENCES APPROACH: Proponents of this theory believe that differences between mainstream cultures and minority cultures in their forms of interaction, linguistic, and cognitive styles can lead to miscommunication and conflict between minority children and their teachers, causing school failure.
6. SECONDARY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES APPROACH: This set of theories, as detailed by John Ogbu, builds on the "cultural differences" approach, adding historical, social, community, and school factors as well.

2. The secondary cultural differences approach

The "secondary cultural differences" approach, called the CULTURAL ECOLOGICAL POSITION by Trueba (1993:6), combines elements from anthropology, sociology, and psychological anthropology. This approach seeks to explain minority school failure by shifting the emphasis from surface-level conflict and differences to factors which are evident on a larger social, cultural, and historical scale. One must look beyond the classroom, indeed beyond the school, to find the root causes for minority school failure. As Ogbu explains, "What the children bring to school—their communities' cultural models or understanding of 'social realities' and the educational strategies that they, their families, and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as within-school factors (1992:5)."

Often, all types of minority groups are joined together in the minds of theorists, policymakers, program designers, and educators. However, Ogbu's research with ethnic minority groups in New

Zealand (the Maori), Japan (the Buraku), India (the Harijans, or "untouchables"), Israel (Oriental Jews), the United States (African Americans) and in other countries has shown that a crucial point when studying minority school failure is to recognize that there are different types of ethnic minority groups (ibid., 8). Ogbu classifies these groups as follows.

1. AUTONOMOUS MINORITIES: These are groups which are minorities primarily in a numerical sense. They are not subordinated to other groups. Most often, they are distinct from the mainstream because they have chosen to be. Examples are the Amish, Orthodox Jews, and Mormons. Ogbu does not deal with this group of minorities to any great extent.
2. VOLUNTARY MINORITIES: These are immigrants, people who have moved more or less voluntarily to a new country. Examples include the Sikhs and Chinese in the United States.
3. INVOLUNTARY MINORITIES: This category is made up of groups which have been subordinated to the dominant group by colonization, conquest, slavery, or by forced migration (ibid., 8; Ogbu 1993:91–92; Trueba 1993:7). Ogbu often uses the term "castelike" for this group. African Americans and native Indian Americans are classified as involuntary minorities, as are the Maori in New Zealand, the Aborigines in Australia, and other indigenous groups.

When diverse ethnic groups come into contact, differences between the two groups are often magnified. Ogbu differentiates between two types of differences as follows.

PRIMARY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES are experienced primarily by voluntary minorities. These are differences that already existed **before** two groups came into contact and are usually differences in **content**, such as a different way of dressing, selecting spouses, or disciplining children. Voluntary minorities perceive that the cultural ways of the majority are different but not necessarily oppositional to their own cultural ways (Ogbu 1993:95). If they do suffer discrimination or prejudice, they will tend to regard it as a temporary condition because they are in a new culture (ibid., 96).

Eventually, they rationalize, they will fit in better. Primary cultural differences, then, are "temporary barriers that can be overcome."

SECONDARY CULTURAL DIFFERENCES are differences that arise **after** two groups come into contact with each other and are characteristic of involuntary minorities. These differences become especially prevalent when minority groups begin to participate in institutions that are controlled by the dominant group, such as schools (Ogbu 1992:8). These oppositional differences often develop as a response to a difficult contact situation, in order to cope with subordination. "Involuntary minorities develop a **new** sense of social or collective identity that is in opposition to the social identity of the dominant group after they have become subordinated" (ibid., 9). In contrast to primary cultural differences, secondary cultural differences are often related to **style** (as opposed to content), such as cognitive, communicative, interactive, and learning styles (Ogbu 1993:94).

When involuntary minorities suffer discrimination and prejudice, they know that these things are not temporary. Because of a rigid, historically-based social structure, involuntary minorities face a barrier which they cannot overcome simply by working hard, getting a good education, or learning the dominant language. Secondary cultural differences are perceived to be "permanent barriers that cannot be overcome (Ogbu 1991:15-20)." Members of involuntary minority groups are often pressured socially and psychologically **not** to assimilate, to remain distinct.

Related to secondary cultural differences is the concept of CULTURAL INVERSION. This is the tendency for involuntary minorities to regard certain forms of behavior, events, symbols, and meanings as inappropriate for them because these are characteristic of the dominant group. In rejecting these, minority groups instead embrace other (often opposite) forms of behavior, events, symbols, and meanings as more appropriate for themselves (Ogbu 1992:8). This results in two opposing cultural frames of reference, one which is appropriate for "us," another which is appropriate for "them."

3. School Achievement

Many children belonging to ethnic minority groups experience difficulties in school. Sometimes these difficulties are short-lived and temporary. Many difficulties, however, are persistent, extensive, and debilitating. What can explain the fact that some minority children are able to overcome initial linguistic and social differences to succeed in school, while others are never able to make that transition? Ogbu believes that school achievement is directly tied to the concepts of primary cultural differences versus secondary cultural differences.

3.1 Primary cultural differences and schooling

Voluntary minorities (usually immigrants) tend to enter school expecting some initial difficulty. They know they will need to learn a new language and culture, and they are willing to do so in order to adapt to the new culture that they find themselves in. To that end, parents encourage their children to work hard, make good grades, and struggle to overcome initial obstacles to success. Primary cultural differences present a challenge, but they are not insurmountable. New language forms and cultural practices are not seen as threatening to home language and culture. They are seen as **additive**, new practices to be used in certain contexts.

3.2 Secondary cultural differences and schooling

Involuntary minorities tend to suffer more extensive and persistent problems at school. Secondary cultural differences, which arise initially to fulfill "boundary-maintaining and coping functions under subordination" are seen as markers of unique identity which must be maintained. There is no strong incentive to give these differences up as long as the oppressive situation still exists which prompted them (ibid., 10). This barrier, formed by secondary cultural differences, may block effective teaching-learning in school situations.

Whereas voluntary minorities view education as additive, involuntary minorities see education as **subtractive**, displacing their home identity, self-worth, language, and community. For this reason, there is a greater pressure to remain distinct, to keep secondary cultural differences intact. There is less family and community pressure to work hard in school and achieve good grades, especially if such an effort would be seen as acculturation to the dominant group.

Ogbu describes the following strategies which involuntary minorities use when faced with the secondary cultural differences present in the school situation.

- If there is a wish to succeed in the school world as defined by the dominant group, ethnic minorities must emulate members of the dominant group, giving up part of their own identity. People who choose this route often experience isolation from their peers.
- Some will consciously behave according to school norms while in school and follow community norms while out of school. Ogbu calls this behavior "accommodation without assimilation."
- Some may choose to camouflage their academic attitudes and abilities. Outwardly, they pretend not to care, but secretly they study and succeed.
- A common response is that of "encapsulation," i.e., getting caught up in peer group pressure and giving up on school. Most of these children eventually fail (ibid., 11).

Thus minority school failure is rooted in a double dilemma: "... the nature of the history, subordination, and exploitation of the minorities, **and** the nature of the minorities' own instrumental and expressive responses to their treatment (Ogbu 1993:88)." Ogbu summarizes the "secondary cultural differences" approach as follows.

> I suggest that the real issue in the school adjustment and academic performance of minority children is not whether the children possess a different language or dialect, a different cognitive style, a different style of interaction, a different communication style, or a different style of socialization or upbringing. Rather, the real issues are threefold: first, whether the children come from a segment of society where people have traditionally experienced unequal opportunity to

use their education or school credentials in a socially and economically meaningful and rewarding manner; second, whether or not the relationship between the minorities and the dominant-group members who control the public schools has encouraged the minorities to perceive and define school learning as an instrument for replacing their cultural identity with the cultural identity of their "oppressors" without full reward or assimilation; and third, whether or not the relationship between the minorities and the schools generates the trust that encourages the minorities to accept school rules and practices that enhance academic success (ibid., 105–6).

4. An example from Southeast Asia

There are a large number of ethnic minority groups in the country of Thailand, both voluntary and involuntary. These include the Chinese, most of whom arrived about one hundred years ago when tin and other mineral resources were discovered. The Chinese have been greatly assimilated into Thai society. Indeed, Chinese people are well represented in the highest social, educational, and economic levels (Smalley 1994:208). This group of people could be categorized as a "voluntary minority."

Other ethnic minority groups include indigenous groups such as: *(a)* the Tai Lüe in northern Thailand (numbering about 30,000)[2] whose presence in Thailand predates that of the ethnic lowland Thai, *(b)* the Muslim Pattani Malay in the south (over 1,000,000) whose formerly-independent state was taken over by Thailand in 1893,[3] *(c)* the mountain-dwelling ethnic groups that migrated into Thailand from Burma over 100 years ago such as the Sgaw Karen (about 252,000 population), *(d)* the ethnic groups that have come from China in the last century such as the Lisu (25,000) and Akha (33,500), and many others. Added to this diverse blend are large groups of refugees from Cambodia and Laos that have dwelled along the eastern borders for over twenty years. In contrast with the ethnic Chinese, many of these groups could be classified as

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[2] All population estimates in this section are from Smalley 1994:365–67.

[3] ibid., 162.

"involuntary minorities." They are in a subordinated position to the dominant Thai group both socially and economically. Many do not enjoy the privileges of citizenship, even those that have lived within the Thai borders for hundreds of years.

As predicted by Ogbu's "secondary cultural differences" approach, the involuntary minorities in Thailand experience a great deal of school failure. For example, Smalley reports that only 14–35 percent of the children of the mountain-dwelling minority groups ever have an opportunity to go to school. Of these, over half drop out in the first two years. Less than 1 percent ever go beyond primary school (ibid., 280). Even those minority children who are able to attend primary school for several years rarely reach full literacy in Standard Thai, with the result that they lose their literacy skills in a matter of years (ibid., 279).

Ogbu would argue that the roots of this kind of failure lie in the involuntary, subordinated nature of their relationship to the dominant ethnic group, the lowland Thai. Many ethnic minorities are considered to be socially inferior, resulting in negative prejudice (Watson 1984:220). The minorities themselves know that many barriers have been placed in front of them by the existing social structure. There is almost no chance for social mobility (in jobs, status, political power) and education has done little to open these avenues up for them. Education, as promoted by the central government, is often seen as **subtractive**. The curriculum is designed to assimilate ethnic minorities into the mainstream Thai culture, not to maintain ethnic identity and language (Smalley 1994:280–81). For these reasons, secondary cultural differences form a strong barrier to success for many of these groups. Despite strong assimilationist efforts on the part of the government, many ethnic groups in Thailand have chosen to remain quite distinct and unique, enduring the hardships that this isolation may impose upon the group (ibid., 332).

5. Related research

Many would credit Ogbu with being one of the first researchers to draw the attention of educators, sociologists, and others to the crucial role that broader sociocultural factors have in relation to minority school failure. While respecting the important groundwork which Ogbu has laid, other researchers have sought to build on that foundation with further investigations and related theories.

Henry T. Trueba asserts that the reasons for minority school failure occur at many levels. The broad macrosocial factors described by John Ogbu are joined with complex psychological, linguistic, and sociolinguistic factors on the local level (Trueba 1989:26).

Trueba raises some questions which still require further investigation (Trueba 1993:6–14).

- What about immigrants who moved involuntarily? (For example, they immigrated as part of a family or larger group with little personal choice.)
- Where do refugees fit in? Are they voluntary or involuntary minorities?
- How does the theory explain involuntary minorities who **do** succeed in school?

All these questions point to the need to go beyond the rather rigid stratification of voluntary *versus* involuntary minority groups. Some individual ethnic minorities do not fit easily into these classifications. Trueba claims that Ogbu's model is too rigid, not allowing for internal stratification within groups (Trueba 1989:148). Particularly, Ogbu's model does not explain involuntary ethnic minorities that **do** succeed in school. Further examination of these students may help us to come to a better understanding of how minority school failure can be reversed (Trueba 1993:10).

Other questions have been posited by Douglas E. Foley. Along with Trueba and others, Foley believes that it is now time to go beyond the "obsession" with minority school failure to find out what promotes success. In order to do this, there needs to be a greater exploration of strategies and attitudes which help involuntary minorities to **succeed** instead of fail (Foley 1991:72). Foley's own research in a South Texas school showed that middle-class hispanic youth were able to break free of the orientation of involuntary minorities, resist racial practices and stereotypes, and succeed in school as individuals. To do this, they used a strategy of "accommodation without assimilation," one of the approaches that

Ogbu also describes. These hispanic youths successfully maintained selected ethnic expressive cultural differences while learning the communicative competencies of mainstream society. Further research into students such as these, who break out of the minority school failure cycle, would further our understanding of how ethnic minority students can be enabled and empowered to succeed in school.

6. Changing failure into success

Some educators may have "given up" on the ethnic minorities in developing countries like Thailand, attributing their school failure to genetic and cultural deficiencies. But if it is recognized that many of the reasons for failure rest with the educational structure itself (as reflective of the greater social structure), there is a possibility to break down the secondary cultural differences which plague these groups. A number of researchers have built on Ogbu's theories by suggesting ways that failure can be changed into success.

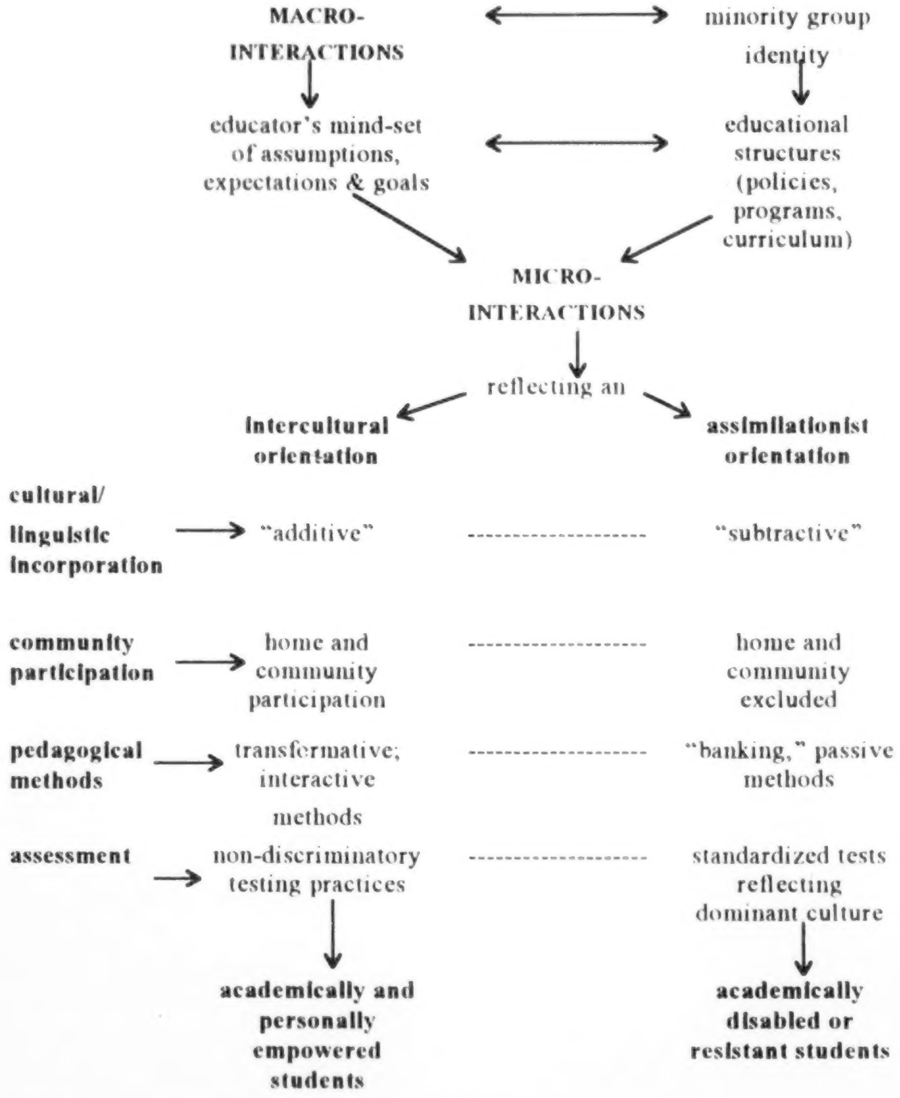
FREDERICK ERICKSON takes a sociolinguistic perspective to the problem of minority school failure. Erickson states that "cultural differences in ways of speaking and listening between the child's speech network (home speech community) and the teacher's speech network, according to the communication process explanation, lead to systematic and recurrent miscommunication in the classroom (1993:29)." These sorts of differences include such things as the way questions are asked, how much eye contact is used, and discourse styles. Problems of miscommunication, especially in early grades, can escalate into distrust and resistance in later grades, eventually leading to the chance of minority school failure (ibid., 48).

Erickson cites research done with the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program in Hawaii. Hawaiian children were allowed to use familiar cultural speech patterns of "overlapping talk," i.e., speaking while other students were speaking. Teachers found that their comprehension and achievement in these lessons was markedly better than in lessons using the more traditional "turn-taking." Use of the "overlapping talk" allowed children to feel more competent in an unfamiliar setting while providing cognitive scaffolding for each other. In the process, their own community and culture was affirmed. Thus, a major "secondary cultural difference" was broken down.

Erickson does not accept the premise that there is nothing that can be done for involuntary minorities. Schools, Erickson asserts, can be used to *change* the existing distributions of power and knowledge in society instead of perpetuating existing inequalities (ibid., 45). Erickson encourages teachers to use CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY, that is, teaching practices that promote and maintain trust and legitimacy between teachers and students (and parents and teachers). In order to do this, teachers must adapt instruction in the direction of the students' home cultural communication style (ibid., 46–48). Many teachers in developing countries are ill-equipped to teach in rural areas, especially in the remote areas where the ethnic minorities tend to live (Vaddhanaphuti 1982:159). They are not trained to deal with children who cannot speak the national language and who have completely different cultural values and motivations. Teachers who are sent to work in these areas can be trained to use culturally responsive pedagogical practices, which, in turn, may break the cycle of secondary cultural differences that promote minority school failure.

JIM CUMMINS has done a great deal of research work on a variety of subjects related to multilingualism, bilingual education, and minority education. As is shown in the chart on the following page, Cummins' framework of "macro-interactions" and "micro-interactions" adds another dimension to the "secondary cultural differences" approach (Cummins 1994:28–33). MACRO-INTERACTIONS are relations of power and status between different groups in society. They can give rise to educational structures—such as policies, programs, and curriculum—which are established by the dominant group in order to reproduce the established relations of power in the broader society. MICRO-INTERACTIONS are interactions between teachers and students which tend to reflect the macro-interactions in the wider society.

The following chart shows how macro-interactions interact with other factors to produce micro-interactions in the classroom. Teachers who have an ASSIMILATIONIST ORIENTATION towards their minority students, especially involuntary minorities, serve to perpetuate the production and maintenance of secondary cultural differences which keep a barrier between minorities and the dominant group. On the other hand, teachers who are enabled to use an INTERCULTURAL ORIENTATION to teaching can allow minority children, especially involuntary minorities, to become academically and personally empowered. This may serve to break the power of secondary cultural differences.


MACRO-INTERACTIONS
minority group identity
educator's mind-set of assumptions, expectations & goals
educational structures (policies, programs, curriculum)
MICRO-INTERACTIONS
reflecting an
intercultural orientation
assimilationist orientation
cultural/ linguistic incorporation
"additive"
"subtractive"
community participation
home and community participation
home and community excluded
pedagogical methods
transformative; interactive methods
"banking," passive methods
assessment
non-discriminatory testing practices
standardized tests reflecting dominant culture
academically and personally empowered students
academically disabled or resistant students

Source: Cummins 1994:34 (adapted)

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In order for minority school failure to be turned into success, there needs to be change on both the "macro-interactions" level and the "micro-interactions" level. Change on the **macro-interactions** level would include:

- allowing ethnic minorities to break out of their subordinated role by giving them more rights and privileges, opening up occupational doors to them, granting them the full rights of citizenship, raising their status in society,
- promoting the value of ethnic minority language and culture,
- allowing school curriculum, programs, and policies to be influenced on the local level by the needs, values, and motivations of ethnic minorities themselves. This would include the use and promotion of the mother tongue in education, not just the national language.

Looking at these points, however, one can see that macro-interactions may be resistant to change. It is very difficult to change values and attitudes, especially those held by a dominant group that enjoys high status and privilege. If governments are highly centralized, there is little hope for localized planning of curriculum and programs.

Micro-interactions, however may be more easy to influence. These interactions are concerned with the day-to-day contact between teachers and students. If teachers in developing countries are empowered to use an "intercultural orientation" with their ethnic minority children, there may be a significant reduction in school failure. This would include:

- incorporating the students' language and culture into the classroom in positive ways. Allowing children to use and develop their mother tongues would build on a strong foundation and encourage greater facility in a second language. In this way, education would be **additive**, not subtractive (not taking away the home culture and language).
- encouraging community participation from the parents and families of ethnic minority children. Parents of ethnic minority children may hold no value for education if they perceive it as something which is imposed on them from

outside, something to which they can see no benefit (ibid., 280).

- allowing ethnic minority children to express their unique experiences and worldviews with teachers and peers through the use of "transformative" teaching practices, that is, teaching methodologies that allow for interaction and critical thinking. This is not to take away from the fact that ethnic minority children also need to become well-versed in the cultural ways of the mainstream society in which they are expected to succeed in life.

It is not necessary that the education story of involuntary ethnic minorities always be one of failure. Steps toward a reversal of this trend must begin with an awareness that the problem is not a simplistic one. It is not enough to lay blame for failure on the minorities themselves. Instead, the problem has deep roots in the educational system itself as a reflection of greater society and culture. An understanding of the research of John Ogbu and others can lead to a greater understanding of these problems and may also lead to possible solutions.

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